

# THE LONDON READER

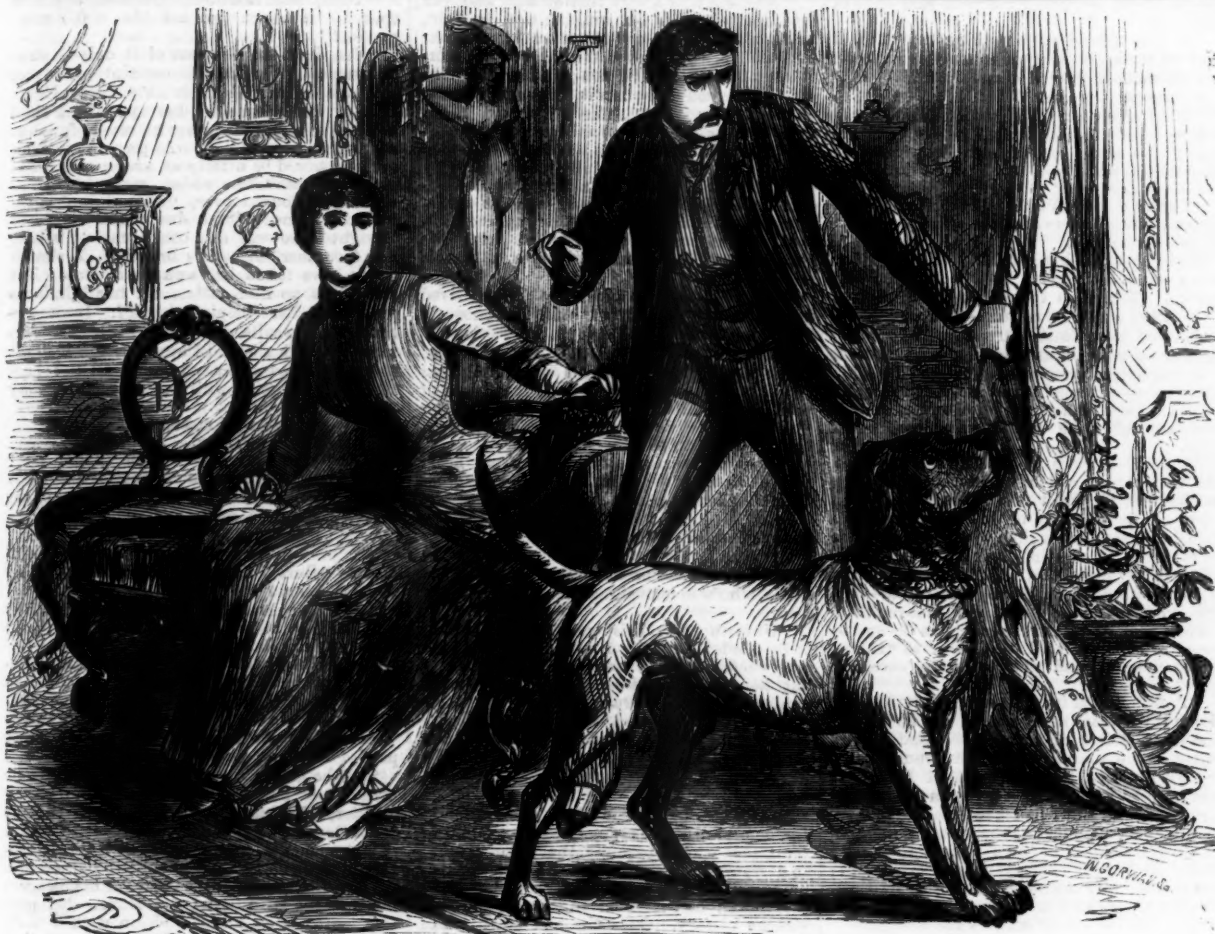
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[NEBO'S WARNING.]

## ROSALIND'S VOW.

### CHAPTER XXI.

#### A NEW ENGAGEMENT.

CLAUD'S demeanour forbade Rosalind asking any more questions regarding the Charltons; and having no further excuse for remaining, she rose slowly and wistfully, and held out her hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Stuart! I thank you very much for your kindness to me."

But Claud seemed to hesitate about letting her go.

"You are quite unfit to travel," he said. Then he added, in a slower and more embarrassed manner, "I don't want to intrude upon your private affairs, but I fear you are in trouble of some kind. If it is in my power to help you in any way, I shall be only too pleased to do it."

Rosalind's lips quivered.

"I am in trouble!" she said, in a low voice. There was a pause for a few minutes.

"I do not ask your confidence," went on Claud, who—if only for the sake of Edith who had loved her—would have been glad to help Rosalind.

"I, of all people, should understand that there are circumstances where it is impossible to be frank and open!"—he said this with some bitterness. "The battle of life is harder for a woman than for a man, and she has less strength to bear the brunt of it. Poor women! I often wonder whether the law of compensation holds good in their case!"

Meanwhile, Rosalind had come to a rapid conclusion. She had always liked and trusted Claud, and she preferred to be under an obligation to him than to anyone else she knew. She turned to him impulsively.

"You are very good, and though I cannot tell you the whole of my story, I will tell you this much: I am very poor, and I know not which way to turn in order to get a living. Can you recommend me to a situation? I am willing to work at anything, and for very little salary."

This was a strange announcement for the wife of one of the richest baronets in Eng-

land to make. Claud could hardly believe she was in her right senses.

"But Sir Kenneth?"—he began, when she quickly interrupted him, a burning crimson dyeing her cheek.

"Sir Kenneth and I have separated. Pray do not ask me why. I have relinquished the position of his wife, and I desire to resume my maiden name. It is the anomaly of my position that has made it so hard for me to obtain employment. I tell you this, and I think I know you too well not to be sure there is no danger of your betraying it."

Claud bowed, and did not speak for a few moments. Amazed as he was, he was not incredulous, for life had taught him many strange lessons, and amongst them the faculty of recognizing distress when he saw it.

When he spoke again, it was in the quick tones of one who had come to a sudden resolution.

"It is not in my power to recommend you to a situation, Miss Grant," he said, dropping naturally into her more familiar maiden name, "for the sufficient reason that I myself am hiding from my friends under a name

that does not belong to me. You are surprised? Have you not lived in the world long enough to know that nothing is certain save the unexpected? Well, as I said before, I am not in a position to recommend you to my own friends, but I can offer you a home in my own household, and you can name your own terms. Your duties will be those of attending to a sick lady."

"Your mother?"

Claud did not immediately reply. He seemed to be weighing the pros and cons of the case.

"If you decide on accepting my offer, I shall be forced to take you into my confidence, but let me hear your decision first."

"I accept your offer."

"Mind, the duties and responsibilities will not be light. Indeed, I had better tell you, that I was about engaging the services of a professional nurse, and should have done so if I had not met you."

"I shall not shrink either the duties or their responsibility," answered Rosalind, in a tone of calm assurance.

Claud looked at her earnestly. He knew she was a woman of strong will, and unflagging energy. More than that, he believed her to be staunch and true as steel—one who could be trusted to the last extremity. Her word, once given, would be as sacred to her as an oath.

It was necessary to take some one into his confidence—circumstances compelled it, and he could hardly have hoped to find a person more suitable if he had searched the world over.

"Then I will trust you. The lady who at the Cedars was called my mother is not my mother—is, in point of fact, only connected with me by the fact of being my cousin's wife, but a tie greater than that of blood binds us together. I was the means of inflicting an awful injury upon her; and in reparation for it I vowed my whole life to her service—and that vow I will keep, so help me Heaven!"

He raised his hand solemnly as he spoke, then drew his chair a little nearer to that of his companion, and went on in a carefully lowered tone,—

"I will tell you in what way I injured her. Some three years ago I was on a visit to her and her husband, and my cousin and I quarrelled. The quarrel began in my remonstrating with him on his treatment of his wife; and unfortunately it took place in a long gallery where he and I had been practising with pistols. My passion got the better of me, and in a perfect access of rage I fired the pistol that I held in my hand straight at my cousin; but at that very moment his wife rushed between us. He was saved from the slightest injury, but she was blinded by the charge."

Claud stopped a moment and looked away, so that Rosalind should not see the emotion he found it impossible to conceal.

"I need not tell you of my remorse. Oculists from London and Berlin were consulted, but they could do no good; and the poor girl found herself condemned to perpetual darkness through my sin. I verily believe that she suffered infinitely less than I did at that dreadful time. If by the sacrifice of my life I could have given her back her sight, Heaven knows how willingly I would have done it. But all I could do was to promise to be her friend—her brother, and to protect her as long as she lived."

"I wished to take up my abode near her, but her husband either was, or pretended to be, jealous; and she implored me to carry out my original design and go to Italy, where I was to study art."

"In obedience to her request I went, and she promised to recall me if it were necessary. In course of time I received the summons, and then I found that she was indeed in a terrible straits. I must explain to you that she had a little nephew under her guardianship. He was an orphan and heir to a very large fortune, which, in case of his death, passed to her. Well, this child had been poisoned by her hand."

"He was ill, and she had been in the habit of giving him his medicine, as he would take it from no hand but hers."

"In the night someone changed the medicine bottles—put carbolic acid in the place of the proper draught, and put it in a similar bottle. Of this my poor friend was quite sure, but it could not be proved; and she, poor thing! was believed to have committed the crime in order to gain possession of the dead boy's fortune, which of course came to her."

"She was now a very rich woman, and her husband, who was extravagant and in debt, tried to take advantage of her wealth; but she resisted, for she believed that he was the murderer of her brother's son; and she resolved that, if she could prevent it, not one farthing of the money for which he had staked should pass into his hands."

"It was then that the villainy of her husband's character was fully revealed. By some means he procured a doctor who certified that his wife was insane, and he thereupon kept her a prisoner in her apartments, threatening, unless she complied with his demands, to have her shut up in a lunatic asylum."

"By means of her old nurse she contrived to get a letter posted to me, and I at once left Italy and returned to England."

"I wanted to quietly accuse my cousin of what he had done, but his wife would not consent to it. She shrank from the shame of publicity; and, besides that, she feared her husband would, in spite of whatever we might do, still contrive to outwit us."

"Her one desire was to escape from him; and so, after much planning, and with great difficulty, I managed to effect her escape; and then, in disguise, I took her to the Cedars, where she passed as my mother."

"She had brought with her nearly all her securities, and had been followed by her former nurse, who was honest and devoted to her interests."

"Unfortunately, this woman (who is still at the Cedars) has been taken ill; (otherwise she would be with us now; consequently our household consists solely of my valet, Ambrose, who is as true as steel.)"

"Lately, I have had some hopes that poor Nona might recover her sight. She says that she can now distinguish between light and darkness, and can also see anything that glitters or shines."

"Of course I have consulted an oculist in London, and he has prescribed a course of treatment which requires the aid of a nurse to carry out properly. It is the duties of this nurse that I wish you to undertake."

Rosalind had listened in silence to this strange history. Once she had started, and seemed on the point of interrupting him, but she restrained herself, and remained quietly attentive till he had finished. All that Mrs. Selwin had told her concerning Pierce Vansittart and his wife, came back to her memory, and thus made the chain complete.

"I am glad you have seen fit to put this confidence in me," she said, as he ceased speaking. "I need hardly say that not a word of what you have told me shall ever pass my lips. You have enlisted my sympathies too, and I will try my very best to be of service to Mrs. Vansittart."

"What!" cried Claud, in absolute, and startled amazement. "How do you know her name?"

Then it was Rosalind's turn to explain, but she merely said that, residing in the neighbourhood of Weir Castle, she had heard sufficient local gossip to be able to connect it with what Mr. Stuart had told her, and Claud once more breathed freely, and then eagerly asked her whether Mr. Vansittart had ever mentioned his wife to her.

"No," she replied, but she did not add that Mr. Vansittart's general conduct had been such as to declare that he utterly ignored the fact of having a wife at all."

"I am sure," went on Claud—to whom it

was naturally an immense relief to be able to speak with even a degree of openness, of his troubles—"I am sure that Pierce Vansittart has not the remotest idea that his wife is still in England, or he would not rest a moment until he had found her. I was enabled to throw him off our track by the manoeuvre of making him suppose we had started for New York, and now I hear that he has spies all over that city, and that even the police have been engaged to find us out."

"Then," said Rosalind, "you are of opinion that he is aware you are his wife's companion?"

"Yes, I am morally sure of it, only it suits his purpose to ignore this certainty, in order to throw additional discredit on poor Nona. If only we can restore her eyesight I shall not fear him and his power so much, for then she will be less helpless. At present, without me, she would be utterly at his mercy. You must not think," he added, while his handsome face clouded over, "that I imperilled her good name without due cause. If I had thought there was any other way of saving her from her husband's brutality, I should never have taken her away with me. But there was no alternative, for her blindness prevented her helping herself. It was a choice of two evils, and I chose the lesser. Fortunately, both she and I are rich, and if flight again becomes necessary, we shall not lack the means of going whithersoever Nona may think safest."

"I wonder you did not leave England?"

Claud smiled slightly.

"Shall I tell you the reason we did not? It was because it seemed the easiest and most natural thing to do; and, by not doing it, we diverted Pierce Vansittart's suspicions from our real place of refuge."

"But why, if I may ask, did you leave the Cedars? Surely that was as safe a retreat as you could find?"

"So I thought when I went there first. But as it was as it is, we were discovered, and forced to leave it."

"He did not tell her in what way this discovery came about, nor by whom it was wrought. The subject was too full of pain for him to care to revert to it. Edith's image was still fresh in his heart, and the bitterest part of his trouble was that he had lost her."

Still, he had never severed from the row he made when, through his hand, blindness fell on Pierce Vansittart's wife. Nothing that he could do would repair the injury inflicted, and it had seemed a small thing to attempt reparation by dedicating his whole life to her service. No devotee ever held the object of his prayers more sacred than Claud did Nona. No poet ever surrounded an ideal vision with a halo of greater veneration. His devotion to her was all the purer because it was not obscured by a lover's passion. He was, at the same time, something more and less than a brother.

It was for this reason that he had striven so hard to conquer his love for Edith. He knew that if he married, it would be quite impossible to make Nona his first thought, and less than this would be to wrong her and himself. As we have seen, passion overcame prudence, and he confessed his affection to Edith. But when the time came that he had to choose between her and betraying Nona's secret, he, without hesitation, accepted the alternative, which banished him from his love.

Nona never knew that he and Edith were more than friends. He had kept the truth carefully concealed from her, seeing that the knowledge would only increase her regret, and that no ultimate good could come of it. It is probable that if she had been aware of the sacrifice Claud was making on her behalf, she might have refused to accept it—might even have insisted on his leaving her to fight her battle alone.

"Come!" said the young man, rising. "I will take you to Nona, and make you acquainted with her."

Rosalind could not help feeling a little excited as she followed him.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## DIPLOMACY.

WHEN Captain Marchant returned to the drawing-room of "The Towers" he found his hostess sitting in front of the fire with bent brows, and tightly-compressed lips, strongly suggestive of ill-temper.

Mr. Barnes-Smith, meanwhile, had retired to the window, where he was industriously engaged in paring his nails.

"I must make a thousand apologies," murmured the officer, with his snuggest bow and smile. "I had a rather important question to ask the lady who has just gone out—"

"I hope she gave you a favourable answer!" interrupted Mrs. Barnes-Smith, with what was intended to be biting sarcasm. "I hope, also, that you did not allow any thought of your impoliteness to me to interfere with the length of your conversation."

"Impoliteness, my dear madam!" exclaimed Marchant, raising his brows in deprecating surprise. Then, with a deeply injured air, he added, "I thought you knew me too well to believe it possible that I could ever be guilty of impoliteness towards you!"

"Humph!" was all the observation the lady vouchsafed to this delicate compliment.

Mr. Barnes-Smith turned round, favouring Marchant with a wink and a broad grin. It was not altogether unpleasant to him to see another man treated to a little of the acidity that was so frequently vented on himself.

Mr. Smith—he had taken his wife's patronymic of "Barnes" at her request—had thought it a very great stroke of luck when Fortune threw in his way a widow with five thousand a-year of unencumbered estate. He had celebrated his engagement with champagne, and all his friends had envied him. But things had not turned out exactly as he wished. Five thousand a-year is all very fine, but so long as it remains in your wife's hands, and you are doled out an allowance of two pounds ten shillings per week, it is difficult to estimate it at its rightful value. Even that two pounds ten shillings was accompanied with grumbling, and rather vinegary reminders that husbands don't usually come to their wives for pocket money!

Altogether, Mr. Smith was of opinion that he had been far better off when he was a bachelor, drawing the modest salary of two hundred a year from an insurance office!

Captain Folke Marchant, as we have seen before, was not wanting in diplomatic abilities, and now he felt they were to be put very strongly to the test. He drew a chair close to that of his hostess, and leaned down confidentially.

"The truth is, I was astonished at the impudence of—of the person who has just left," he said, in a carefully lowered tone. "Of course, it matters little to me whether she tries to get into families under false pretences, so long as those families don't include intimate friends of my own; but I followed her out to warn her against attempting to enter this family. I told her that though I might hold my tongue so long as she confined her attention to people of whom I knew nothing, yet when it came to duping you—" he paused expressively, thereby intimating that language failed to express the enormity of such an offence.

"Ah!" exclaimed the lady, eagerly. "Then she is an adventurer?"

"An adventurer of the most pronounced type!" unblushingly responded the Captain.

"There, Adolphus!" cried Mrs. Smith triumphantly to her husband. "You hear what Captain Marchant says? And you said you were sure a woman with such a face must have a nature to match. A nice judge of character you are! Now I flatter myself that I can see as far through a stone wall as most people, and the first moment I saw her I thought the creature as bold, stuck up a piece of goods as I had ever set eyes on!"

"You always have the same opinion of women younger and better-looking than your-

self!" muttered Mr. Smith, *sotto voce*; but he was too sagacious to give audible utterance to this sentiment.

Captain Marchant filled up the pause that ensued, and produced a couple of cards from his pocket-book.

"I have kept my promise, Mrs. Barnes-Smith, and procured you tickets for Lady De Courcy's "At Home," and for Mrs. Howard-Howard's dance next week. Both ladies are most anxious to make your acquaintance—and that of your husband."

The husband grinned incredulously. The wife seized the cards and gazed at them with unconcealed delight. It was the dream of her life to enter the great world of fashion, and Captain Marchant's ability to get her admission to a few good houses, whose doors would otherwise have been closed to her, had received a very substantial acknowledgment in the shape of loans.

But in spite of her pleasure at the prospect of making Lady de Courcy's and Mrs. Howard-Howard's acquaintance, Mrs. Barnes-Smith was not on this occasion inclined to forget prudence; and when Captain Marchant delicately approached the real object of his visit, and asked her if she could lend him a hundred pounds on a note-of-hand—at whatever interest she chose to name—she reminded him that the interest on the last two loans had not yet been paid; and while regretting that she could not oblige him on this occasion, declared, with an angry glance at her husband, that she had lately settled some long-standing debts, and was, in consequence, absolutely drained of all her ready-money.

Unfortunately for Captain Marchant, she was a lady perfectly well able to take care of herself, and having once announced her decision there was no chance of her altering it. He recognized this, and so made the best of the position, and declaring that it really was a matter of little consequence, bade her an airy adieu; and declining her invitation to stay luncheon, he walked rapidly in the direction of the station, and had time, before the train came, to look round at the passengers waiting for its arrival, and assure himself that Rosalind was not amongst them.

He asked a porter when the last up-train had gone, and from the man's answer convinced himself that Rosalind could not possibly have caught it. Where, then, could she be? There was only one road from The Towers to the station, and it was certain he had not passed her as he came up, for he had kept a sharp look-out all the way.

"Things are going contrarily to-day," he said to himself, as he lighted a cigar. "Well, I must make the best of them, I suppose, and see if I can't get something out of Vansittart."

Arrived in London, he took a hansom, and drove at once to his club, where the first person he saw was Mr. Pierce Vansittart himself, who had just ordered luncheon and was now awaiting its appearance. Marchant joined him at this meal, and when it was over the two sauntered out to smoke a cigar.

"How long do you intend staying in town?" asked the officer, attempting to lead the conversation into a personal channel.

"I can't tell you. It depends on whether I succeed in obtaining news of my wife or not."

"Ah! Then you are up on business, not pleasure?"

"Business most decidedly," returned Vansittart, rather grimly. "I have not the money for pleasure, however much I may have the inclination."

Marchant's face fell. The declaration did not sound favourable for his own hopes.

"I am sorry for that," he said, frankly, "and surprised as well. I thought, when your wife's nephew died—there was a tinge of hesitation as he spoke these words—" she came into the whole of his large fortune!"

"She did—I did not."

"But now that she has left you, you have full control of the money, surely?"

"Nothing of the sort. I wish to Heaven I had! If that were the case, you may rest

assured I should not be making all these efforts to find her. She would be welcome to stay away as long as she liked, and the longer the better."

This was news to Marchant, who had fancied that Mrs. Vansittart's flight had left her husband a rich man. He was silent for a few minutes, watching the smoke wreaths in a meditative fashion, and revolving in his mind how to give most weight to the communication he intended making regarding the former tenants of the Cedars. He saw now that it was worth his while to turn informer, and he cursed his own foolishness for not having telegraphed to Vansittart the moment he suspected his wife's presence at the lonely old house.

"By the way, where are you staying now?" asked Vansittart, breaking in on his friend's reverie.

"I? Oh, I am still with my friends, the Charltons, at Crowthorne Manor."

"Business or pleasure?" queried the other, cynically.

"Both. Fact is, I am in love with Miss Charlton—you needn't look incredulous, Vansittart. I assure you it is a fact."

"Oh, my dear fellow, I would not dispute your word for anything; but I suppose the being in love premises that the young lady has money?"

"You are right, it does. She is an heiress, and if I only succeed in winning her, I intend settling down into a model husband, and playing the rôle of country squire for the rest of my life."

"Turning over a new leaf, in fact? Well, I congratulate you. I take it for granted that Miss Charlton has sufficient good taste to return your affection?"

"That's the rub. So far she has shown herself decidedly rebellious, but I have her father's good wishes, and I fancy that, sooner or later, she must give in—in fact, I intend that she shall give in. I have never been foiled by a woman yet, and I have had considerable experience with the sex."

Experience counts for very little with some women," observed Vansittart, sententially.

"However, I hope Miss Charlton won't prove obdurate. You have my best wishes for success, and I wish it were in my power to aid you in your wooing."

"It is in your power. Lend me a hundred pounds, and you will be contributing very materially to my probable success."

"A hundred pounds! Impossible! I give you my word of honour that I have not fifty pounds standing to my credit at the bank. All my income, and a good deal more, goes in paying interest on mortgages. If you were to promise to repay me in an hour's time I could not lend you the money."

"But you could accept a bill. Your name is still good for that!"

"Perhaps so, but the business is too risky. No, Marchant, I have helped you a good many times, but I can't this time."

"But you must!" exclaimed the officer, energetically. "Look here, Vansittart, if I don't get the money by the end of this week I am a ruined man, and all my chances of winning Edith Charlton will be gone for ever. Saunders has positively declared that unless I give him a hundred pounds he will make me bankrupt, and then think what an exposure there will be! If I can only tide matters over until after my engagement is made public I shall be all right. Don't you understand?"

"I understand," responded Vansittart, with the cheerfulness with which we are wont to bear our friends' troubles; "but all the same, I really don't see why I must find the money for you!"

"Because I can make it worth your while. It isn't a pleasant thing to bargain with one's friends, so I shall trust to your generosity. You are anxious to discover two people—one is your wife, the other is Sir Kenneth Hawtrey's wife. I may be able to give you the clue to both."

"Do so, and I'll back your bill without hesitation!" said Vansittart, rapidly, and then Marchant told him, first of all, of his recognition of Mrs. Vansittart at the Cedars, and, secondly, of his meeting with Rosalind that morning.

Vansittart listened impatiently, but without interruption; and, as the officer finished, he said,—

"So Claud Trevelyan is still with Nona! I feared as much. Why, in the name of Heaven, did you not let me know directly you discovered her?"

"Because I was not aware that her absence made any pecuniary difference to you; and I fancied that, if I betrayed her, it meant she would be accused of murdering her nephew. I did not relish the idea of playing Judas."

Vansittart cast a swift glance at him from under his lashes, and a sneering smile curved his lips beneath his heavy moustache.

"You are grown scrupulous all of a sudden. I confess I don't understand it, but doubtless you have your reasons, and they are probably satisfactory ones; still, I really can't see that your information is of much value. My wife has left the Cedars, and you know no more of her present whereabouts than I do. As for Rosalind Hawtreys—well, it is true she told you she was staying in London, but London is a big place, and I may look for her for twelve months without being able to find her."

"Wait a minute," Marchant returned, drawing a slip of paper from his pocket. "It so happened that the young lady gave her address to Mrs. Smith, from whom I contrived to procure it. It is No. 12, — Street, Euston-road. There, take it! Now, concerning your wife. If she herself is not at the Cedars, an old servant of hers is still there, and from her you ought to be able to obtain a clue."

"Obtain a clue from Abigail Young? She would cut her tongue out rather than give it to me! She hates me like poison! No, I don't think it will be much good to tackle her," said Vansittart, gloomily, and he walked on for some distance without speaking.

"But, I say, old fellow," observed Marchant, presently, with a somewhat puzzled expression of countenance, "do you mean to tell me that you can't reap any benefit from your wife's fortune?"

"Not a penny piece! All the estate her brother left was personal. It consisted of various securities, and a large quantity of diamonds; and all these she contrived to take away with her. I am telling you the truth, Marchant."

The officer believed him; but, for all that, he made one more effort to induce him to accept a bill at six months. Vansittart, however, was obdurate, declaring that as soon as he found his wife he would be glad enough to oblige his friend, but, at the present moment, his own means were too limited to allow him to do so.

In order to avoid Marchant's importunities he changed the subject.

"I had a visitor at Weir Castle last week," he observed. "You will be surprised when you hear it was Sir Kenneth Hawtreys!"

The officer gave a long, low whistle.

"I am surprised. Did he come as friend or foe?"

"Certainly not friend. It is many years since Kenneth Hawtreys and I were friends. No, he came to demand an explanation of my former relations with Maraquita de Belvoir. He insisted on hearing what he called 'the truth.'"

"And you?"

"Well, I told him he knew as much of the affair as I did, and that it was a mistake to rake up old love stories. He wished me to give him Maraquita's letters, but I answered that they were burnt years ago."

"Was that true?"

Vansittart shrugged his shoulders.

"True or not, he will never see them. I expect he wanted to show the letters to his wife—beautiful fury that she is! She is far

handsomer than Maraquita was in her best days!"

"Yes, a dangerous woman to trifle with," answered Marchant, significantly; and soon after the friends—if such men can be called "friends"—parted, and the officer went back to Crowthorne, thinking of the scene he had witnessed at the Cedars, and the long, narrow box he had seen Claud Trevelyan bury in the plantation.

Did that box contain the securities and gems of which Vansittart had spoken?

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### NONA'S DREAM.

CLAUD took Rosalind into a darkened room, where, in the dim light, she was just able to discern a feminine form lying on a couch.

Poor Nona Vansittart had discarded her disguise, and now appeared as a young and beautiful woman, with quantities of golden hair, and wild-looking dark eyes, and, strange to say, though the sight was gone, the eyes themselves were as lovely as ever.

"Nona," the young man said, "I have brought you a nurse who will be tender and kind, and on whose faith you may place implicit reliance. She is an old friend of mine, one of whom you have heard me speak. Her name was Rosalind Grant."

Nona started to her feet, turning in the direction from whence the voice came, and stretching out her hands with the touchingly helpless action of the blind.

"Then you have told—?" she began, but broke off abruptly as Claud put his hand on her arm.

"I have told her enough to assure her sympathy. Let that satisfy you."

"Indeed," said Rosalind, very earnestly, as she came forward, "you may trust me. I have had troubles myself, and it shall be the object of my life to try and lessen yours."

"Your voice is true and sweet—yes, I do not think I need be afraid of you," Nona returned, slowly; then she passed her hand gently over the younger woman's face, and, apparently satisfied by the result, bent down and kissed Rosalind's lips.

After this all her scruples seemed to vanish, and to the great relief both of Claud and Rosalind she unhesitatingly accepted the latter as a friend.

This made our heroine's task so much the easier, besides having another good effect. In poor Mrs. Vansittart's sorrows she almost forgot her own, for they seemed trivial enough in comparison. Altogether she was thankful that Fate had thrown her in Claud's way on that eventful morning.

For two or three days matters went on very quietly; then Rosalind went up to town to pay the few shillings she owed for rent—Claud having, with considerate kindness, pressed upon her a five-pound note as part of her salary in advance.

There were also a few things—letters and garments—she had left behind, and these she packed up in a black bag, small enough to be carried in her hand.

By the time she had finished her arrangements, and paid the landlady, it was dusk, and when she left the house a thin, drizzling rain was falling, and adding to the gloom.

"Thank Heaven, I have quitted that miserable place for ever!" she said to herself, as the door closed behind her; and then she set off to walk to the station.

Before she had gone far she noticed a man who seemed to be following her, and when she reached the station and took her ticket he was close to her elbow. After that, however, she did not see him again, and she dismissed the subject from her mind, thinking that she must have been mistaken in her surmise, and that the man's continued proximity had been only the result of accident.

When she arrived at her destination Claud, wrapped up in a huge cloak, and broad-

brimmed hat that served to conceal his face, was waiting to escort her home.

"It is a miserable night!" he observed. "I hope you won't mind walking? I would have taken a cab, but I wish to avoid observation as much as possible."

"Pray don't think of doing such a thing!" exclaimed Rosalind, who seemed already to have identified herself with her new friends. "I have a waterproof, and that will keep me dry."

He offered his arm, which she took, and they made the best of their way along the muddy lane leading to the White House. Once or twice Claud turned round to look back, and the second time Rosalind asked what was the matter.

"Nothing," he answered, "only I fancied I heard some one behind. It is so dark that it would be well-nigh impossible to see any one half-a-dozen yards away."

He paused again to listen, but there was no sound to be heard save the melancholy dripping of the raindrops from the bare branches of the trees, and, as he said, it was too dark to see. It did not strike Rosalind to tell him of her fancy that she had been followed from the Euston-road. Naturally enough she did not connect the two circumstances.

When they reached the house Claud fetched a dark lantern, and carefully retraced his steps, and then he was enabled to trace other footsteps that had followed closely on his own, and his idea that he had been tracked was confirmed. But the footprints ceased at the gates of the house, and went back again; so the conclusion he finally drew was that the man, whoever he might be, had found he had made a mistake, and had thereupon returned to the station.

He said nothing of this to Nona, whose nerves, originally strong, were now liable to be thoroughly upset at the slightest alarm. Indeed, the very next morning she gave evidence of the weak state into which she had fallen; for when Claud joined her in her own sitting-room—a small apartment—opening on the garden—she said,

"I have had a bad dream, Claud, and it is worrying me. I woke up in the middle of the night terrified, and I have not been able to sleep since."

He sat down by her side on the couch, and gently stroked her hand.

"My dear Nona, you should not allow yourself to be worried by such trivial things. We are all liable to bad dreams occasionally, you know."

"But this was such a vivid one. I dreamt that *he*—my husband—had found out where the box was, and that he carried it off in the middle of the night. I saw the scene—oh! so distinctly!"

Claud sighed.

"I wish, Nona, you would make up your mind to let him have the box and the money. He would cease persecuting you then."

She turned upon him with a fierceness almost incomprehensible in so gentle a being. "Yes, but at what cost? That money I look upon as the price of my nephew's blood. It was for that his life was wrested from him—for that the cruel poison tortured him. Shall I ever forget his cries, as he lay in my arms, writhing in his agonies? Oh! the remembrance is with me still. It maddens me. It makes me long for a terrible, but most just vengeance on the wretch who took that innocent life!"

She rose in her excitement, and began pacing backwards and forwards, Claud watching her apprehensively. Blind as she was, there was no danger of her running against anything, for the furniture was arranged with a view to her affliction, and there was nothing in the middle of the room for her to stumble on. Presently, she came back and resumed her seat, and in the dim light—for the room was darkened in obedience to the oculist's orders—Claud saw that tears were still streaming down her pallid cheeks.

"Hush!" he said, soothingly. "Why should you distress yourself by recalling these sad



memories? To think of them can do no good."

"Perhaps not, but it can, and does, keep alive my hatred of my villain husband. For the injuries he has done me I make no complaint, but for the agony he inflicted on a helpless child—there is no punishment great enough for him. I have only one way of revenging little Willie's death, and that is taking care that his murderer shall not have his money, and for that I will struggle as long as I live."

Claud made no further attempt to combat her resolution. He was too unselfish to remind her that his life as well as being sacrificed in the atmosphere of mystery in which they lived. True, he had voluntarily devoted himself to her service, and he had never regretted the chivalric impulse that had led him to do it; but the thought of Edith and her lost love made his life one constant pain.

"If I recover my sight," went on Nona, after a pause, "I shall be able to fight my own battles, and I shall have no fear of Pierce Vansittart, even if he does shut me up in a lunatic asylum. Then, when I am free, I will devote the greater part of little Willie's money to building a hospital for sick children. Claud," turning to him, desperately, "do you think I ever shall recover my sight?"

"The oculist gives us hope, dear. If you are careful, and follow his instructions, I think there is every probability of the hope being fulfilled."

"That is something to live for!" she said. Then she added, musingly, "Even the blind have their compensations, for the other senses all become sharpened, and I sometimes think they have the gift of second sight as well. My dream last night, for instance. I am sure it is true, Claud!" Her voice changed—grew sharp with alarm. "You must go to the Cedars and bring that box away with you. I cannot rest any longer for fear it may be discovered. Do you hear? You must go—you must!"

"Certainly I will go, if you wish it," returned Claud, seeing that she was in no mood to be contradicted. "But you must recollect that the box is too heavy for me to bring here without challenging suspicion."

"You can open it and take the securities and the diamonds out. The rest can be left in charge of Abigail Young."

"When do you wish me to go?"

"Now—at once—this very day!"

"But, my dear Nona," expostulated Claud, "surely there is no necessity for this hurry?"

"There is, there is!" she returned, feverishly. "My dream tells me that the box is not safe, and there is danger if it remains in its present hiding-place one moment more than is necessary. I shall not have an instant's peace until I know it is removed."

"Very well," Claud said, in a tone of resignation. "Then I will start for W—shire by the four o'clock train from Paddington. I need not tell you that it would not do for me to arrive at the Cedars before dusk, for fear of being recognised."

"Surely you can disguise yourself!"

"Yes, I must disguise myself, I suppose, much as I dislike it. There is another point that we have not considered. How will you like being left here alone?"

"I shall not be alone. Rosalind and Andrea will both be with me."

"Andrea would not prove much good in case of emergency. He is thoroughly trustworthy, but he is somewhat of a coward physically. Rosalind, though she is a woman, is infinitely more reliable. Still I don't relish the idea of leaving you."

"What is there to fear? No one suspects our presence here, and I feel no apprehensions like I did at the Cedars. I suppose I am growing more used to my position. At any rate, I am much braver than I was. Besides, I have Nero!"

"Ah, yes! Nero is a protection, I admit."

"By the way," said Nona, "where is he? I haven't seen him this morning."

"I will call him," answered Claud, rising as he spoke, and going into the passage. A moment afterwards he returned, followed by a huge mastiff, who bounded up to Nona and began licking her hands.

"Down, Nero, down, air!" she said, gently repulsing him. A sudden change came over the dog; he sniffed suspiciously round, erected his bristles, and gave vent to a low, threatening growl.

Claud watched him uneasily, and then followed him to the window, which was a French one opening on the garden. A dark green blind was drawn down over it, but one of the doors was open.

"Why, Nona, how is this? The window is open!" said the young man, as he closed it, and turned with some surprise to his companion, who had risen and come to his side.

"Is it? I thought I fastened it securely after I had thrown the crumbs out to the birds half-an-hour ago! I am afraid," she added, with a melancholy inflection in her voice, "that my boasted sense of touch is not so keen as it might be."

Claud did not tell her it was unwise, in her present position, to run any risks; but he hastily left the room, and made a hurried examination of the grounds, for the dog's demeanour had made him fancy there might have been some stranger lurking about the place.

However, he found no traces of one, and returned to the house, inclined to ridicule his own fears, which last night, as well as this morning, had caused him useless apprehension. He was a few minutes too late. Had he come out when Nero first showed signs of dissatisfaction he would have seen a man's figure stealing swiftly along under the shadow of the shrubs, and had he been near enough he might have heard the triumphant whisper,—

"Found, at last, by Jove!"

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY.

At midday Claud set off for London, and left Paddington by the train he had mentioned, arriving at Crowthorne somewhere about seven o'clock. He was not by any means in love with his errand, and it was only because he saw that Nona had set her heart upon his undertaking the journey that he had allowed himself to be persuaded.

Personally, he thought the chest containing the jewels and securities was much safer in its present hiding-place than it would be under his own supervision; but it was useless to urge this, for Nona was not inclined to be logical in her fancies, and, after all, the valuables were hers, and she had a right to do what she liked with them.

He had wrapped himself in the cloak and broad-brimmed hat he usually wore, and these served to conceal his identity; but he was quite unprepared for the test to which his disguise was to be subjected. At the station before Crowthorne three people got into his compartment, where he was sitting alone, and these three were none other than Edith Charlton and her father, and Captain Marchant!

The young girl looked pale and tired, but pretty as ever. She was dressed in a dark green velvet costume, trimmed with soft, rich fur, and a little *toque* to match, which became her admirably.

Claud's heart began to beat tumultuously as he saw her, and it was with some difficulty that he restrained the exclamation that rose to his lips, and drawing back still farther into the corner of the carriage, interposed the newspaper between himself and his companions.

The latter had been to a bazaar at a neighbouring village, and were discussing it with some animation.

Edith's silvery laugh rang out now and then, but much less frequently than of old; and it was with a curiously compounded

feeling of sorrow and joy that Claud recognised a certain mournfulness both in her face and voice.

She was not the same joyous, *riante* creature, full of youth and high spirits, who had taken shelter at the Cedars on that summer morning when first they met!

She looked at him curiously once or twice. The eyes of love are keen, and, despite his disguising dress, there was something in his figure that struck her as familiar. Fortunately for Claud, the light was very dim and flickering, and the corner in which he sat enveloped in shadow, otherwise Captain Marchant, too, might have had his suspicions aroused.

"I am afraid you are tired, Edith," the officer said, solicitously, and Claud ground his teeth together at the familiarity implied by the use of the young girl's Christian name.

"You have been too busy at your stall. We ought not to have allowed you to do so much."

I think I did very little compared with most of the other girls," she responded, languidly. "One or two seemed to be running about the whole of the day!"

"Running about!" repeated the Squire, sardonically. "I should think they were. Never was so pestered by girls in my life—wanted me to put in a dozen raffles for rubbish that, if I had won it—which was very unlikely, since no outsider ever does win anything at bazaars—I should have thrown into the fire. A set of bold, unprincipled hussies I call 'em! I should have liked to see you," addressing his daughter, "behaving in such a fashion!"

"Some girls don't mind what they do so that they attract attention!" murmured the Captain, laughing, and caressing his silky moustache.

"Attract! Disgust you should say!" amended the Squire, grimly. "However, they didn't get much out of me—that's one comfort."

"No, papa; you were extremely stingy, I must say."

The Squire accepted the imputation with much complacency.

"One has a right to button up one's breeches pockets when it comes to choosing between that and being cheated," chuckled he.

At this moment Crowthorne was reached, and the train stopped. The Squire got out first, Marchant following. Then Edith rose, but as she did so a little bag she carried in her hand fell to the ground.

Claud sprang forward and picked it up, and, in stooping, his hat got pushed back a little, and his eyes met hers. A stifled cry broke from her, showing she recognised him, and he then became aware of his imprudence.

"For Heaven's sake say nothing of my presence!" he managed to whisper, and she made a swift motion of the head signifying assent, while he sank back in his corner again, for he had determined, under the circumstances, to go on to the next station, and walk from there to the Cedars.

As the train moved off, an involuntary groan escaped his lips. Happiness had been so very near him. He had but to reach out his hand in order to seize it, and yet a cruel fate kept him back!

"I dare not justify myself in her eyes," he muttered aloud, "and she, believing me false, will marry Marchant, who is utterly unworthy of her. Yes, I foresee that will be the end of it all. Ah! the pity of it—the pity of it!"

As the Cedars lay about midway between the two stations, Claud had not much farther to walk than if he had alighted at Crowthorne. The old woman in charge, Abigail Young, was as surprised as she was delighted to see him, and inundated him with questions concerning Nona.

"I am afraid, Abigail," said the young man, kindly; "you have had a sorry time of it here since we left?"

"Well, sir, it hasn't been over bright; but I shouldn't have minded a bit if the rheumatism hadn't taken hold of me. It's the damp, I

expect—such a damp house I never was in all my born days!"

And, indeed, a great change had come over the old woman, who had formerly been both strong and active. She could now only just manage to hobble about, and her face looked older by several years.

"I suppose no one has been to visit you, Abigail?"

She smiled grimly, and shook her head.

"No fear, Master Claud. The country people are too much afraid of ghosts to venture near the place after nightfall."

"Then," Claud's voice fell to a whisper, "there is no fear but what the box is all right?"

"None whatever, sir, I should say. You might search the world over without being able to find a better hiding-place."

"I agree with you; but for all that I am going to remove it, and when it is gone there will be no necessity for you to remain here any longer. You must return to your own home, and be nursed back to health again."

Abigail sighed.

"I should have liked to be with Miss Nona, sir; but I really don't think I am strong enough to attend to her properly. I pray night and day that her eyesight may be restored to her, and she may be saved from the persecution of that wicked man—her husband. But," added Abigail, suddenly, thinking herself of housewifely duties, "you must be hungry, sir. I haven't got much in the house, not knowing you were coming; but there is ham, and eggs. Do you think you could manage with them?"

"Try me," smiled Claud, and the old woman bustled away, while he wandered aimlessly through the richly-furnished rooms, which had been poor Nona's home and prison in one.

He did not intend digging up the buried box until after midnight. By that time there would be no fear of interruption—indeed, even in daylight there would have been very little, for, as Abigail Young said, the evil reputation the house had acquired kept the villagers away. Still, in an affair like the present, it was best to make assurance doubly sure.

And so, after he had eaten the supper Abigail prepared, Claud threw himself on the couch, and, tired out with his day's journey, fell asleep. He dreamt of Edith—Edith standing on the other side of a river, and stretching out her hands to him, as if appealing for help!

He slept longer than he intended. When he woke it was one hour after midnight.

(To be continued.)

## MY LADY OF THE LAKE.

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### CHAPTER LI.

"HE MUST BE FOUND."

LADY DALKEITH had, in the character of the "Good Samaritan," seen death too often not to be conversant with it; and when the spirit of Sir Roger fled, she realized the truth at once, even though the grim scythe-bearer had stolen in very gently at the door and beckoned him away with an unseen hand.

It was some time, however, before the widow made any attempt to move. She knelt by the body of her dead husband in wordless prayer, her mind filled with heartfelt regret that she had not tried more to do her duty by him; but it was now altogether too late for regret.

The one star peering out of the darkness for her was the fact of their mutual reconciliation and forgiveness. She could not be thankful enough that she had lost no time in answering Sir Roger's summons.

Lord Rangor found her thus on her knees some time later, when he went to the room to inquire whether the Baronet was better. Very tenderly he raised her when he saw what had

happened; and for one brief moment the thought obtruded that the woman whom he had loved in secret so long, was free, and his pulses struck out with a free elastic stroke; but not for long.

Lord Rangor was every inch a man. He remembered Lady Dalkeith's reception of the avowal of his affection before he left M—, and he had had but little time to forget her almost indignant denial to Sir Roger of there being anything beyond friendship between them.

There are men who believe in winning a woman's love by steady perseverance, even against her will, and there is no doubt that most things come to him who waits; but Lord Rangor was not one of these. If ever he gained a girl's heart, he felt that it must be given to him freely and fully, not dragged from her with reluctance. So, after that one glad rush of thought, he bravely put up his hand and drew a veil over self.

"Lady Dalkeith," he murmured, "I am so grieved for your sorrow. Come away, and the nurse shall return and perform the last sad offices for your dead. The rest I can do for you, unless you have any very especial orders to be carried out."

"No. Unless he left any himself I have not. Of course he will be buried with his ancestors in the old place in Scotland."

"I think I had better send for his solicitors. Sir Roger has lately made a will and transacted a great deal of business."

"Oh, I am glad of that," she answered, eagerly, "for now we shall know what his wishes were. Where is the nurse?"

"I thought you would like to be alone with him, so I told her to rest; but I will send for her."

"How thoughtful you are, Lord Rangor! Indeed I would not have missed our last talk for the world; but oh! how sad that it should be the last!" she answered, with emotion.

"Yes, death is a great leveller, Lady Dalkeith; but now let me persuade you to come downstairs."

"Not quite yet. I will stay till all is done. Do not fear for me, I am used to sad scenes. By-and-by I want to talk to you. Where may I join you, Lord Rangor?"

"I should like you to come to the study. The nurse will show you the room," he replied. "I have much to say to you. Poor Dalkeith," he continued, turning to look at the wasted form upon the bed, "how changed he was!"

"And, thank Heaven, for the better," returned the other, gently. "I shall ever be grateful for his parting words. It seems so unutterably sad not to have been reconciled when death steps in and forgiveness becomes impossible!"

"That is true, but even when it has been unspoken, we may hope that it has been in the heart."

"I should have found that cold comfort; and now, please leave me."

Lord Rangor pressed her hand, and went quietly from the room, and having himself aroused the nurse, who had fallen asleep on the sofa in the sitting-room provided for her use, bade her return to Lady Dalkeith's assistance. An hour later the door opened, and her ladyship entered Lord Rangor's study.

The room was brilliantly lighted, and the picture of "My Lady of the Lake," if not seen to such advantage as by daylight, formed a remarkably attractive feature.

Lord Rangor was seated at the table writing when Lady Dalkeith entered, but he arose to meet her at once.

Very beautiful she looked as she advanced towards him, her sad, pale face wearing a heavenly expression. She held out her hand to him with a gesture which bespoke her need of sympathy, and began at once upon what was in her mind.

"Where is May?" she asked, "and why was she not with her father at such a time?"

He took the outstretched fingers in a firm clasp, and led her towards the picture.

"There is your daughter, Lady Dalkeith," he said, very softly, "and I think you will admit that she is a girl to be proud of. I have never seen a more perfect face and form than is here depicted. I believe I value that picture beyond all my other possessions. 'My Lady of the Lake' and I have become excellent friends, but poor Dalkeith was not pleased at my having purchased it, so I am going to ask you to do me the favour of accepting it. You have a better right to such a treasure than I have."

"I do not quite understand," she answered, dreamily, her eyes rivetted upon the beautiful girl so ably represented before her. "Is it possible that that lovely young creature is my daughter?"

"More than possible? Sir Roger recognised her at once. There is no doubt about it whatever!"

"Recognised her?" she inquired, suddenly, gazing at him instead of the portrait. "If such a picture had been painted from life, he must have known it."

"That is just it, he did not. Do you remember I told you about his being lured abroad by the report that you were dead?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, do you recollect my confession to you at M— that I had foolishly and thoughtlessly sent an artist down to Farnshire with an introduction to Sir Roger?"

"Yes."

"That artist was at Lake St. Ormo during Sir Roger's absence, and must have painted that life study then."

Lady Dalkeith looked very grave. A cloud of anxiety was upon her brow, and for a while she was thoughtful and silent.

Then she spoke.

"That man sent my husband the false news to get him away from home," she said, in an awed whisper.

"You think so?"

"I am sure."

The two regarded one another very earnestly.

"Heaven grant that no harm came of the acquaintance to my child!" continued the mother, pitifully. "Where is May? I cannot understand her absence at such a time at all!"

"Lady Dalkeith, come and sit down," returned the Earl, a little hurriedly, "and I will tell you all I know. It is not much, I fear, but I had better relate what I have to say at once, and not keep you in suspense."

"As soon as ever I returned from Australia I went down to Lake St. Ormo, having heard at the club on the evening of my arrival that a well-known London physician had been sent for to see some one at Lake St. Ormo Cottage. No one could tell me, however, whether it was Sir Roger or his daughter who was ill; but all this I hoped to find out upon my arrival, and so much I did ascertain."

"It was Miss Dalkeith who was ailing, whom the doctor had seen the day before and ordered away for change of air, and she had started some hours previous to my arrival with Sir Roger and his housekeeper, leaving only an old gardener, an honest but ignorant fellow, to take care of the house."

"From him I learnt what little I know, and very little it is. But Sir Roger had not informed him where he was going, nor had he left any address even for the forwarding of letters. Under these circumstances I was puzzled what to do; but at length decided to write to Sir Roger and tell him that I had a message to deliver to his daughter from you, and entreat him to let me see her soon."

"To this letter I had no reply whatever, until, upon returning home one evening, I found your husband here, and in a towering passion at seeing his daughter's picture in my house—a picture of the existence of which he was totally unaware."

"I explained that it had hung upon the walls of the Academy from whence I had purchased it, and my explanation was far from pleasing to him. He offered to buy it



at double the price I had given for it; but I wanted you to see this picture, and promised myself the pleasure of giving it to you.

"This I told him, and is brought on an explanation of your existence, and the trick which had been played upon him concerning your supposed death."

"Who did you say painted it?" she inquired.

"Mr. Guy Forrester."

"I cannot tell what his object may have been, Lord Rangor," replied her ladyship, with decision; "but I fear it could in no wise be any good one, and we may place our fingers upon Mr. Guy Forrester as the person who so deceived my poor husband in this matter. And now how churlish you must think me for not thanking you for your splendid gift. I cannot refuse it since it is what it is; and I am more than grateful for your kind thought for me."

"You are right, I am indeed proud of my beautiful daughter. The picture is very exquisite, and I conclude that it is Lake St. Ormo, and the home where my dear girl has lived so long."

"Yes; that is my little fishing retreat, which I let to Sir Roger—Lake St. Ormo cottage, and, in truth, I have scarcely been there since my poor old father died, not being a fisherman myself."

"And is it very like May?"

"Her father evidently thought so; but, dear Lady Dalkeith, much as I have desired to see your daughter, I have never yet done so. I hope you will introduce me to her very soon, and if she in any way resembles her mother in character, as she undoubtedly does in personal appearance, I cannot fail to admire and esteem her greatly."

"You have never seen her?" cried Lady Dalkeith in alarm. "She has not been to see her father all this time? Oh! what can she be thinking about?"

"Possibly, nay, *probably* she does not know of his illness. Women's hearts are always softened by sorrow or suffering, and I feel sure Miss Dalkeith cannot be aware that Sir Roger has been so long in danger."

"Then why has she not known? Why, oh! why did you not let her know, my friend? Even though you were a stranger to her, you might have been sure I should wish it. And what will she say when she hears that her poor father is dead? She will have just cause to complain, Lord Rangor."

"Lady Dalkeith, I had no idea more than the man in the moon where to find her. Sir Roger either could not or would not tell me anything about her. Why, I cannot guess; unless my possession of the picture made him in any way suspicious of me. Still, I left no stone unturned to find Miss Dalkeith, but up to now without the faintest success."

Suddenly Lady Dalkeith laid her hand upon Lord Rangor's arm.

"Where is Mr. Forrester?" she inquired, with a nameless terror lurking in her eyes. "Great Heaven! Surely, surely my darling cannot be with him!"

"Heaven forbid!" he ejaculated with fervour; "but I have not an idea where the man is. I do not believe he is now in England."

Lady Dalkeith covered her face with her hands, and when she removed them it was perfectly white, and she looked at Lord Rangor earnestly.

"He must be found!" she said, and burst into a flood of tears.

## CHAPTER LII.

LADY DALKEITH BECOMES THE HEROINE OF SOCIETY.

SIR ROGER'S solicitors were summoned to Lord Rangor's house to see Lady Dalkeith, and treated her with marked courtesy and deference. And very greatly was she surprised to hear that her husband had left her his sole executrix and legatee—no other name

save her own appearing in his will as a recipient of any benefit whatever.

There was one reference only made to May in that document, namely, "My dear daughter, May, I leave to her mother's care, and under her sole and entire guardianship."

Sir Roger had kept his threat to Guy Forrester, and had left May nothing.

His wishes tallied with those of the widow: his remains were to be removed to Scotland, to rest in the family vault of the Dalkeiths, in the private chapel in the pine wood, which somehow seemed an eminently suitable place for the grave, sombre, proud Dalkeiths.

The estate was let, but the Earl's body was taken straight to the chapel, where the rugged old Scotch tenantry were permitted to visit the coffin, and lay upon it their offerings of flowers or their native heather; and although they had seen little or nothing of Sir Roger since his marriage, they remembered him when they were boys together, even though there had been but little communication kept up between the mansion and the cottages, and many a cold, grey eye softened at the memory of old times, around which distance had lent the charms of softness, as the haze does to the rugged landscape.

It was a sorrowful time to poor Lady Dalkeith. The solicitors could give no information whatever concerning her daughter.

Nor were the inquiries they made at her ladyship's orders of any avail, although they resorted to advertisements in the "agony columns" of the *Times*, and other leading papers, nothing whatever was heard of May Dalkeith and Mrs. Wheeler. The earth might have opened and swallowed them up for all that could be learnt of their whereabouts.

Lady Dalkeith went to Scotland, to be present at her husband's funeral; and the tenants at the old house made her welcome there, together with Celestine and Lord Rangor.

She could scarcely keep back her blinding tears as they made their way under the blue-green pine-trees, with the rosy sun setting in the West.

It seemed so utterly sad to pass over the very ground where they had walked when their love was new, where he had told her of his affection and of his hopes—the latter, with her own, to be so soon faded and broken. And now? Now nothing but the dust remained to testify that her lover had once been a living and moving thing!

It was soon over.

Lady Dalkeith, when known as Mrs. Roslyn, had laid many a humble friend to rest, or rather had seen them so laid; but as she stood taking a last look at her husband's coffin she felt that until now she had really never understood the great sadness and solemnity of death.

But after a time she let them lead her away, back to the fine old place which was now really her own; and that was the last time Lady Dalkeith was out of the house for some days.

Mr. and Mrs. Chancey were very kind to the sad-faced widow; and their bright and bonny children hushed their merriment at their parents' bidding, awed by the sweet, sad, white face of Lady Dalkeith; for not only was she suffering at the sudden breaking up of the mental strain of so many years, her parting from beloved friends, and the snapping of the sacred ties which bound her even in her uncongenial marriage, but the loss of her child, and her anxiety concerning her was weighing her down to the earth; and under these numerous troubles her grand nerves and health gave way, and the once tearless eyes were seldom dry.

Lord Rangor returned to town, and as soon as she was well enough to move she and Celestine followed him, taking up their abode with the child they had brought from the antipodes in a comfortable lodging in Brook-street, and day after day those appeals went out to the daughter who she so longed to clasp to her breast.

When Sir Roger Dalkeith took May away from Lake St. Ormo Cottage at the physician's orders, they travelled by slow stages to Wales, where, after a certain amount of inquiry, he heard of a pretty furnished cottage facing the sea, which might be said to be away from the haunts of men.

There he took May and Mrs. Wheeler.

The sea was a great delight to May. The ever-changing sky and ocean were a new experience to her.

She loved to sit upon the rocks and watch the vessels sailing by with their white wings spread, and to weave romances about them as they passed from her ken to the great unknown space beyond.

Once more her brush and pallet were called into requisition. The clouds lifted somewhat from her mind.

There were steps down from their cottage to the sea, and a boat, kept in a little creek between the rocks, where it lay in safety even in the roughest weather.

In this boat Sir Roger took May out daily, and, as her strength returned, he taught her to handle an oar.

Perhaps the girl had never been more peacefully happy than during those first weeks at Penvern Bay. Sir Roger was kinder to her than he had ever been, and she began to find a solace in his companionship and he in hers.

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot," the father and daughter seemed to be learning to understand one another at last.

Their happy days were broken asunder by Sir Roger being obliged to run up to town, and into Farnshire on business, for since he would give their address to no one, lest Guy Forrester should by chance hear it, he was obliged to go and attend to matters personally. And how little did either the father or daughter think, as they stood hand clasped in hand, ere he mounted into the hired fly which waited to convey him to the distant station, that it was for the last time.

May grew anxious at her father's prolonged absence, but he had so distinctly expressed his wishes that no one should know of their retreat, not even old Thomas, that the girl never even dreamed of disobeying him.

She felt too anxious even to do her painting, for time passed on, and not one word came to her of the father who, little as she knew it, was lying amidst his clay-cold ancestors as lifeless as they.

Mrs. Wheeler did her best to comfort her.

"Sir Roger always had a way of his own, dearie," she whispered, although her own heart misgave her sadly. "He never lets anyone interfere with his actions, and, perhaps, he has found things at Lake St. Ormo which require his presence. Never fear, lassie, when he has finished his business he will come back, never fear."

"But why does he not write?" queried May, nervously.

"Sir Roger never did like writing," asserted the good old woman, boldly, although she really knew little or nothing upon the subject. "And, besides, he does not wish anyone to know who you are. How could he address to you, dearie, as Miss or Mrs.? No, I don't see how a man like Sir Roger could put it on paper anyhow, and I am sure no one about here knows who he is. One and all calls him Mr. Dalkeith, and, of course, I takes no notice."

"Let us enjoy ourselves, my dear. You miss your beating now, don't you, dearie? But why should you? You're accustomed to it now, and so used I to be when I was young, and I'll try again."

The upshot of which conversation was that the boat was daily seen to ride away upon the blue waters from the little natural landing-place at the foot of the steps from the cottage garden at Penvern; and, although the girl's eyes looked sad and grave with an unexpressed fear, still the pale cheeks were less white and thin than they had been. But, even now, few would have recognised the chastened beauty of

Mrs. Guy Forrester in the bright and brilliant girl, glowing with life and health, who looked back, with laughing blue eyes, at her mother, from the canvas of the picture of "My Lady of the Lake," which was her greatest earthly treasure.

Lady Dalkeith did not remain long in London. The idea took possession of her mind that if ever her child returned, it would be to Lake St. Ormo Cottage, and there she set up her tent, in the home which had so long sheltered her husband and daughter.

There was still a considerable part of the lease granted to Sir Roger—twenty-one years. And, bidding Lord Rangor adieu, Lady Dalkeith, with her two charges, Celestine and little Mary, travelled down to Farnshire, and was warmly welcomed by old Thomas Mandrake, who was now given a comfortable room in the house, to his intense satisfaction. Moreover, Lady Dalkeith soon had three female servants, and old Thomas found himself in clover, and began to wonder less at the mysteries of table laying and the use of clean tumblers and knives.

Thomas became absolutely devoted to Lady Dalkeith, who was wondrously kind to him, and seemed to take real pleasure in his society, he being the only person who could tell her about May.

The story of Lady Dalkeith rang through society. She became the fashion, and, even in her quiet retreat, her old friends sought her out, and new ones made her acquaintance.

It was impossible for her to hide her light under a bushel; society had inquired where all the years of her life had been spent since they had known her, and Lord Rangor had spoken, and amply supplied the details they sought, telling them of her noble life of usefulness in the new world, where she had taken refuge.

Lady Dalkeith was, in truth, a heroine after that. Whether people are good or bad themselves, in every mind there is the reverence of goodness, and the very worldlings praised the deserted wife, who arose above her painful position, and gained for herself name and fame.

Returning with generosity to the man who had treated her with so little consideration, to be exonerated from all blame by his dying lips, and to find herself one of the richest women in England.

Yet, with all these advantages, Lady Dalkeith was far from happy. None of these things satisfied her heart.

She was for ever longing for a sight of her daughter's face, and a touch of her hand, and her mind was filled with anxiety concerning her.

And she longed, too, for the old life of usefulness, and the help and companionship of her friend Dr. Martin, and, if the truth must be told, his honest manly features were with her scarcely less often than the beautiful ones of her daughter May.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### NOT YET PLAYED OUT.

TWELVE months nearly had passed away since Sir Roger left his daughter May at the pretty cottage at Penvern Bay upon the least known part of the Welsh coast; and since her residence there no one had been near their abode, save the tradespeople from the distant village, and the fishermen who came along their way both by sea and land to their cottages lying some mile or so further around the bend of the rugged brown rocks, which made a shelter and barrier between the cottage at Penvern and the roughest blasts from the sea, where there was a picturesque fisher settlement.

No newspapers ever penetrated within that region, and it was only from scraps around some articles of food from the town that Mrs. Wheeler ever picked up any pieces of news at all.

It is therefore little to be wondered at that

those appeals to May in the "agony columns" never met her eyes, nor those of her old friend the housekeeper. But they were both seen and noted by *someone*, nevertheless.

We left Mr. Guy Forrester in a not very happy frame of mind with his cousin, Gerald Andrews, settled in at his studio chambers, taking his ease in a manner worthy of Guy himself. But, nevertheless, he did not greatly appreciate the honour conferred upon him when it was practised upon himself; and he eagerly looked forward to the time when his cheque should arrive, and enable him to get rid of the human barnacle which had thus settled upon him.

Mr. Andrews, although he made himself exceedingly agreeable, watched Guy's movements pretty closely, to that gentleman's decided annoyance.

There had been a time when these two young men had cared little what the other knew of his actions; but a mistrust had now grown up in the mind of each, and they were scarcely so fond of one another as they had been in times of yore, and each felt that the other was ready to use his follies as the lever to his own advantage; and undoubtedly the parson now had the best of the situation.

To the artist's astonishment no cheque arrived, and his cousin wrote to a friend of his to do his work until he could return.

The two young men were sitting smoking together, each reading—Gerald a French novel, and Guy an English newspaper which he had just received—when suddenly a word which was very much the reverse of canonical burst from his lips.

The other looked up from his book. "Hullo, Guy! what's the matter?" he asked, with interest, while a smile crossed his lips; but none was to be seen upon the face of Guy Forrester, who scarcely seemed to be aware of his presence.

"If I had only waited!" he muttered. "It is exactly like my luck, confound it! What a splendid hand I held! And now, now I fear all is lost."

"My dear fellow, are you talking the language of the Land of Fire, or what? Pray explain yourself," and the speaker laid his hand somewhat roughly on Guy's shoulder to arouse him, which that young man seemed inclined to resent; for he turned upon him with flashing eyes.

"You need run up no longer bills for a *locum tenens*, Gerald," he said, abruptly. "It is all up with me. I shall not be able to assist you with a single penny. And the deuce is in it how I am to get off paying what I owe here. You need not look so surprised. There are to be no more golden eggs for either of us—my goose is dead!"

Gerald Andrews sat in silent reflection for some minutes.

"Who was it?" he inquired at length. But the artist was not inclined to satisfy his curiosity.

"That is my business!" he answered, roughly. "And it would do you no good to know."

And as the death of Sir Roger Dalkeith was only one among many in the obituary of that date Mr. Andrews was unable to find out what his cousin refused to tell him. But nevertheless that refusal irritated his temper.

"I am sorry for you, Guy," he said at length, somewhat unpleasantly. "But, old fellow, if you have not money you have money's worth. I'll take that picture to clear off old scores, and make what I can out of it. It will sell if I let it go cheap."

"Let it go cheap!" almost shouted the artist. "Why, I have worked like a slave upon that picture, and it is for next year's Academy in London."

"Is it? I think not, Guy, unless you have any other better plan to propose. I cannot waste more of my time here, it is too valuable. And, dear boy, money I must have. So it is of no use to quarrel with me."

"I'll be shot if you shall have it," cried the artist, in fierce anger, and went off out of the

room like a sky-rocket, while Gerald Andrews remained quietly in his chair, a contemptuous smile curling his golden moustache.

"I have only to whisper one word in his ear," he said, unpleasantly. "It was a good thought of mine to have had that register searched, but I never meant to mention it, even to him, unless he obliged me to do so, and it seems he is bent on it," and, smiling still, he continued the love story he was reading; then sauntered off into the town, and had an interview with a picture dealer, who he took to Guy's studio, to see the picture under dispute. And when the artist came back the canvas was gone!

His fury knew no bounds, but Gerald Andrews stilled it in a moment.

"Guy," he said, slowly and distinctly, "I have lately come in possession of a valuable little document. You may read it with pleasure. It will show you that it is useless to kick up a row. No wonder you paled at sight of the name of 'St. Clement's Church.' I can appreciate your feelings, for bigamy is a dangerous game. I'll trust you with the certificate, Guy, as I can get another for half-a-crown," he laughed, insolently, and his words were none too soon, for Guy Forrester had seized the paper and torn it into fragments, which he scattered at his cousin's feet.

"That is childish," said Mr. Andrews. "Your secret is safe with me, Guy, so long as you don't drive me to extremities. The picture sold fairly well, and I am off to England by the first train. Be sensible, my dear fellow, and you will yet be prosperous." And, with a nod, he left the room and his cousin to his bitter reflections; while Gerald Andrews quietly packed his small bag, and started for the station.

As to Guy Forrester he sat quite still, his face growing paler and more pale as the hopelessness of his position became apparent to him, and the word which his cousin had uttered stood out before his mental vision in letters of fire.

"Fool that I was to let him know about May!" he muttered, restlessly. "Yet I thought it better to trust him than a stranger! Now I know that I was wrong. How could I guess that he would pry into the past and rake up old scores? He would scarcely like it himself. But there! He is a sharper fellow than I am, after all, and has managed to steer his bark of life clear of—*crime*, even though it was laden with a cargo of follies and indiscretions. I am helpless. He has taken the bread out of my mouth, curse him! I expected a thousand for that picture, and I daresay he sold it for a quarter that sum."

"What in Heaven's name could have made him think I had married the Gipsy? Ah! I know, that letter he had received from Australia. He told me of it on the day I married May. I might have guessed with such a clue he would ferret it out like the bloodhound he is. And now he talks of settling down into a benedict," and Guy laughed a loud discordant laugh.

It very soon got wind that the English artist was selling off his pictures cheap, and that there was something mysterious in his manner of so doing, since he had not interviewed the dealer at all, nor appeared upon the scene, and Guy's creditors became quite as pressing as English ones could possibly have been.

In the end he had to make his escape by night, leaving everything behind him, save such luggage as he could hurry away in a "voiture," which he engaged at a distant quarter of the city. And there was considerable excitement when it was discovered that Mr. Guy Forrester had flown.

As to that gentleman, he had decided to find his wife—that is, his *second* wife—and ascertain whether her father had relented, or whether he had, after all, left his money, or any part of it to her.

And it was not long before he was daily searching the agony columns to see what fresh appeals were made to May.

One thing was plainly understood by him



that Lady Dalkeith, who he had himself killed in Switzerland, was in the flesh in London; but when and how she came upon the scene he had yet to learn, and he was not long in doing so upon his arrival in the great metropolis.

He walked coolly into the "Arts Club," and there learnt all he required to know—namely, that Lord Rangor travelling in Australia had lighted upon Lady Dalkeith, who was living the life of an angel and saint combined in the town of M—.

He heard how his lordship had communicated to Sir Roger the fact of his wife's existence, the old man's illness, and the return of Lady Dalkeith just in time to receive her husband's blessing and to inherit his entire property; while the news that he had left his daughter nothing was commented upon with surprised emphasis.

"There is some mystery about that girl, you may take my word for it," said his informer. "And poor Lady Dalkeith is heart-broken because she has vanished!"

"Vanished!" echoed Gny, unguardedly. "Why of course she is still at Lake St. Ormo Cottage; she has never left there since her childhood. The world is *terra incognita* to her, she would be simply afraid to go out into it alone. Depend upon it she is 'at the cottage all right.'"

"That can scarcely be, my dear Forrester!" laughed the other; "since Lady Dalkeith has taken up her own abode there, so as to be able to welcome her daughter should she return."

"You astonish me," returned the inquirer, but he was noticeably silent for the rest of the evening, watching the smoke curl up from his choice cigar, and making his plans; but what those plans were must be told in a fresh chapter.

It was, however, evident from the eager expression of the man's face and the glitter of his dark eyes that hope of some sort was once more very much alive in his heart, and that his deep game was not yet played out!

(To be continued.)

## THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER.

—10—

### CHAPTER XXXI.

THERE was not a single misgiving in Brenda's mind when she found herself alone with Paul Desborough at "The Miller's Rest."

It never occurred to her that Sir Eric had not the smallest intention of keeping his promise, and she suggested that the bell should be rung for some more teasups.

"Don't you think we may as well drink our tea first? We don't know how long Mrs. Wyndham will keep him."

"Just as you like," said Brenda, carelessly, as she walked towards the window.

"Won't you pour it out? A man looks such a fool with a teapot in his hand!"

She turned back from the window, and filled two cups; but she would not sit down in Darby and Joan fashion by the table.

Taking her own cup in her hand, she went back to her favourite position. Paul followed her, and leant against the window-frame, also with his cup in his hand.

"I thought you never drank tea in the evening?"

"I don't as a rule; but then you never pour it out for me. Do you remember my challenging you to have tea with me in this very room?" he asked, with a slight smile.

Brenda drew her brows together.

"It was Eric's arrangement, not mine."

"Then I am very grateful to Eric."

"You know it was," she exclaimed, impatiently. "Don't seem as if you doubted it. I only wish he would be quick!"

"I am in no hurry," he said, quietly, letting his eyes rest on her graceful figure, as she leant out of the window to pick a rose.

It woke such memories in her heart that she did not speak for a long time, and Paul was quite content to wait.

Her thoughts travelled back to the past, when she stood in that very window with Cyril, and she blushed to think how his arms had been round her, whilst his lips touched her cheek.

Then she remembered Sir Eric's fierce anger, which struck her as so unreasonable at the time. He had even denounced his cousin for bringing her to this very inn, where he had appointed to meet her himself, which showed how unjust he was.

"Why is there a prejudice against 'The Miller's Rest'?" she asked presently.

"Perhaps because lovers are rather fond of it," hesitating slightly, because he did not wish to mention the last elopement which Mrs. Best was blamed for furthering. "Don't you think that if I were 'the somebody else' we talked of once that you and I could be as happy here as Adam and Eve in Paradise?"

"That is such a large 'if.'"

"Is it? Even when 'the somebody else' is engaged to another somebody?" his dark eyes fixed on her face.

The blushes which rose at once to cheek and brow might have told him that there was not the slightest hope for him. But he was half mad that night, and felt desperately anxious to play his last card.

"Suppose you had mistaken 'the somebody else'?" she asked very quietly, as she shook an insect off the rose she had picked.

"Perhaps there is no 'somebody else'?" his heart giving a bound, as if it would jump from his breast. "Oh, Brenda! can't you love me? No one on earth could love you half as much!" trying to put his arm round her, whilst his voice grew hoarse with the depth of his feelings.

She drew herself away from him with the utmost haste.

"You know I can't. Why do you ask me now?"

"Because, for once in my life, I have you all to myself. There is not a soul to come between us. Darling, be good to me!" catching hold of her hands, and covering them with kisses.

Not a leaf was stirring—not a bird twittered—not a sound was to be heard—not even a step down below, or the echo of a voice from another room. It seemed to her excited imagination as if she were alone with Paul Desborough—alone in the world, with only the soft, delusive moonlight all around to arouse sentiment and to deaden prudence—alone, beyond the reach of any outward help.

"It is unmanly—ungenerous of you to take advantage of me now. I won't stay; I'll go home at once!" she cried, excitedly.

"Not till you've promised to be my wife," he said, holding her small hands in his eager grasp, and looking down into her eyes, with his whole heart in his own. "Brenda, I must have you. I can't do without you. Give yourself to me, and I swear that you shall never regret it."

"Never—never!"

"But you must. Darling, there's nothing on earth I won't do for you;" his handsome face working with emotion. "I'll shape my life to any course you like," covering her hands once more with passionate kisses. "I'll give up any and everything you object to. I'll be a different man!"

"You would have to. Listen to me," trying to speak quietly, though her heart was throbbing fast, as she snatched her hands away. "I would never marry you, not if there weren't another man in the world. Is that enough?"

"No! Somebody has slandered me, and told you my story upside down."

"Was there any need for slander?" looking up with serious eyes; but her lashes drooped the next moment under his glowing glance.

"Yes, they might have told you that what was a pure mistake was a scoundrel's intentional act. Brenda, listen!" he said, earn-

estly. "Am I to be blamed for what was no fault of my own? When I married Lillian Graham—"

"You married her?" in intense surprise, as she leant her head against the rose-leaves.

"Yes, at a foreign embassy," in a low voice, as he passed his hand across his forehead. "The diplomat was new at his post, and neither of us had got up the rules. We married without the three weeks' notice, and when the chain had become unbearable—when penal servitude seemed better than matrimony with such a woman—when every hope was crushed, and every softer sentiment knocked out of me by a woman's falseness, I learnt that I was free!"

"She had trusted you. Weren't you bound in honour to marry her again?"

"No; thank Heaven! We had a fearful quarrel, and she left me, saying that she would never look upon my face again. I think I did my duty by her when I gave her half my income, and, at first, she was more than satisfied. Now—"

"Now she wants more," suggested Brenda, recollecting the passionate appeal she had chanced to overhear in Lord Thornton's garden.

"It is all a pretence," angrily. "She hadn't a heart ten years ago, when she was a girl. Do you think she is likely to have developed one when she is a woman?"

"I almost think you ought to take her back," gently.

"No," with a shudder. "I'd give her every penny I possess. I'd turn to and begin working for my living to-morrow, but I must be free. I'd shoot myself sooner than take up those chains again!"

There was a pause, during which his thoughts went back to that half-forgotten time, which had gone far to ruin his faith in woman, and his face grew gloomy with the weight of a past sorrow. He drew a deep breath, and made a movement as if he would shake off unpleasant memories, and turned to the girl beside him, who seemed to belong to a different sphere.

"Can't you find one word of pity for me?" he said, sadly.

"Was it a runaway match?"

"It was."

"Then she gave up home and friends, and everything for you, and you cast her from you as soon as you were tired of her! I think my pity goes the other way."

"Then you are most cruelly unjust!" he exclaimed, stung to the quick. "I gave up my father for her. He was the best, the noblest, man that ever lived. He shut the door in my face when I went to him, and he died whilst I was away," his voice choked.

"That was dreadful."

"Yes, and not the only dreadful thing she brought upon me. Oh, Heaven! if you knew but half!" clenching his fist, whilst the veins of his forehead swelled with the remembrance of past anger. "And then you ask me to take her back—to take her back now, when I've known you! You've taught me that truth and purity and honour are not mere fables. You've made me see the possibility of a better, manlier life for the future, and I ask you, as there is a Heaven above us, not to throw me back upon myself. Brenda, love me!"

He stretched out his arms to her imploringly, but she slipped past him into the middle of the room. His words moved her against her will, but her love for a man of such a widely different stamp saved her from yielding to any softer impulse.

"I've told you that it is impossible," she said, quietly, as she looked round at him with tenderest compassion in her eyes. "I'm as sorry for you as I can be, but I should only make matters worse if I married you without loving you. And now, don't let us talk about it any more. I'm not going to wait for Eric any longer. We will go home at once." So saying she walked up to the fireplace, and rang the bell.

Paul waited gloomily by the window, his arms folded over his heaving chest. This was his last chance, and he saw it going from him.

Mrs. Best herself answered the bell, her fat face rippling with smiles.

"Will you tell them, please, to bring the horses round at once?" said Brenda, rather haughtily, for she had taken an instinctive dislike to the landlady.

"The horses, ma'am!" opening her round eyes still further than nature had intended. "What horses do you mean? There is not one in the stables!"

"What are you thinking of? The horses that brought us here, of course!"

"But the groom took them back as soon as you got off them. I thought for sure and certain it was by your orders, ma'am!" looking solidly before her.

"There must be some mistake!" almost gasping in her dismay. "Mr. Desborough, do you hear?"

"George can't have made such a mistake as that," said Paul, slowly. "He will be coming back directly."

"I've two very nice bedrooms, furnished in first-rate style," put in Mrs. Best, glibly, "and I can answer for it, I can make you very comfortable, if you and the Captain (Desborough was often mistaken for a military man) could make up your minds to stay here, ma'am."

"Quite impossible, thank you," said Brenda, coldly. "I suppose you have a cart—if you haven't a fly? I'll go home in that."

"That careless boy, Jim, had an accident with the cart only this morning, and I told him to take it into Winchester, and stay there till it was mended. But no doubt the horses will come back, and if you have any orders for me, ma'am, you've only got to ring that bell. I've sent the girl to bed, but I don't mind sitting up myself!"

"Go and find out some means of sending me back to The Towers to-night, for go back I will, if I have to walk every inch of the way," very resolutely.

Mrs. Best smiled, dropped a curtsy, and withdrew. Brenda watched the door close upon her portly form, then turned to Paul.

"What is the meaning of this?" she asked, very gravely, as she stood in the centre of the room drawn up to her full height.

"Don't ask me," and he threw up his hands as if he meant to say figuratively that he washed them of all concern in the matter.

"But I do ask you!" fixing her eyes upon him. "You are the only person besides myself concerned in this arrangement. As it was not by my orders, it must have been by yours that those horses were sent away!"

"Pon my word of honour I had nothing to do with this," he protested, vehemently.

"I don't believe you!" she said, contemptuously, and turned her back upon him promptly.

#### CHAPTER XXXII.

Most men would have been so entirely disheartened by such a rebuff that they would have given up the game from that moment; but Paul Desborough, when face to face with an emergency, always had spirit enough to carry him over it.

"You know that you can insult me as you like," he said, proudly; "but if you were a man, you should pay for it!"

"Haven't you insulted me?" she asked, breathlessly. "It sets my blood on fire to think of what you've done!"

"I defy you to say that I have not treated you with as much respect as if a thousand chaperons had been looking on!"

"Do you call it respect to bring me here under the pretence of a meeting with my guardian, when you know as well as possible that he wasn't coming?"

"Don't be harsh on me. You drove me to a desperate expedient; but you ought to be the last person in the world to abuse me. You can't know what love is if you blame me! I'll do anything on earth to please you! You shall sleep in comfort here, but I'll go out and lie down in the first shed I come to!"

"You are very good!" with the utmost scorn; "but I shall sleep at The Towers, and nowhere else!"

"You can't get there. It is impossible!"

"As I told you before, if there's nothing to take me, I'll walk!"

"You couldn't do it; you would faint, and drop down on the road. Oh, Brenda! listen to me," coming close beside her. "The night will soon be over, and I'll spend it in the garden, or anywhere; but I've a special license in my pocket, and the first thing in the morning we will go to Harborough church and get married!"

"Are you mad?" quivering with excitement from head to foot.

"It's too late to fight against it, dearest!" as he suddenly threw his arm round her, and, stooping over her angry face, kissed it passionately. "You are mine now! mine for ever!"

She tore herself from him in fierce disgust, and sprang towards the door, but he was too quick for her, and got in front.

"Just wait a moment and consider," he said, soothingly. "If you make a fuss, you'll only create a scandal. Surely we can manage our own business without letting all the world into our secret."

"I have no secret!" she said, proudly. "Let me pass through that door, or I'll alarm the house!"

"You can't go out into the night without a shelter for your head. But say one kind word to me, and I'll go at once!"

"I will tell you one thing," looking at him with flashing eyes, "if I live to a hundred, I'll never forgive you! never!—never!"

"What have I done?" he asked, excitedly. "I've only loved you better than some others!"

"Don't talk of love!" she said, contemptuously; "you don't know what it means! Open that door at once!"

For an answer he put his back against it, and folded his arms, having worked himself up to such a pitch of excitement that he was far beyond being able to count the consequences of what he did.

He knew that his cause was hopelessly lost, but he would not give it up.

He faced her with no sign of flinching on his pale, determined face, whilst she stood before him, her breast heaving, her breath coming in short gasps, her glorious eyes flashing fire.

"You call yourself a gentleman!" she said, in a tone of concentrated contempt; "and you laid such a trap as this for an innocent girl! If there had been one spark of gentlemanly feeling in your composition you would not have cared to buy a wife at the loss of your self-respect! Good-bye! I recommend you to avoid The Towers for the future!"

She turned away with the intention of climbing out of the open window, having calculated that the trellis would be likely to bear her weight; but Paul sprang forward, and caught hold of her arm.

"Stop! stop!" he cried. "I pledge my word—"

"Let me go! Don't dare to touch me!" she cried, passionately.

"I won't let you go till you tell me that you forgive me!" looking down into her face with a despairing appeal in his dark eyes. "What will my life be without you?"

He looked so wild and desperate that for an instant her brave heart gave a bound of fear. They were both so occupied with their own tempestuous feelings that they failed to catch the clatter of horses' hoofs outside, or the sound of quick steps on the stairs.

"Let me go this instant!" she cried, breathlessly, and the next moment the door was thrown open and Cyril Farquhar stood

before them. Instinctively Paul Desborough's fingers relaxed their hold, and with a cry of joy, Brenda sprang into her cousin's arms, feeling as safe as if a whole army of men had been round her.

Cyril's fair face was stern as death, but his blue eyes literally blazed, as he put his arm protectingly round Brenda's trembling form and looked from her to Desborough.

"I will take you home," he said, quite quietly to his cousin, after a moment's reflection. "As for you, Mr. Desborough, I will settle with you later on!"

"I don't see what right you have to interfere," said Paul, suddenly, feeling as if his heart would burst with rage, and yet knowing that it would be infinitely better to suppress it.

"I shall not take the trouble to explain," haughtily; "but you shall answer to me for this night's work before many days have past. Come, Brenda!"

In silence they descended the stairs, and to her great relief, she found George and the three horses waiting at the door.

Cyril helped her to mount Satanella, then quietly took possession of his own horse and rode by her side out of the gate.

Not a soul seemed to be stirring at the inn. Mrs. Best apparently thought it wiser to keep out of the way, and the hunch-backed ostler showed no sign of existence.

Cyril gave a backward glance at the one lighted window and shivered. His thoughts went back to that day when he stood there with Brenda by his side, and he fancied that she loved him better than all the world!

What a fool he had been to think it! To-day she had gone there willingly of her own accord with Desborough—the very man whom he had warned her against. And though she never meant to stay there, it was certainly the strongest proof of preference she could have shown him.

His heart was hot within him, but he did not say a word, riding on through the moonlit lanes in stern silence; and Brenda, utterly exhausted in mind as well as body, was content to know that she was safe under his care without asking any questions.

All the way to "The Miller's Rest" George had been much exercised in his mind about the orders given to him by his master.

Sir Eric had told him to bring all the horses home, whatever was said to him by anyone else, and not to mention his intention to a soul.

This caution aroused his suspicions, and made him think that he was asked to play a sorry trick on Miss Farquhar.

He turned it over in his mind—this way and that—coming to the conclusion that he could never face Mr. Cyril if any harm happened to his young lady through his means. After this his mind was soon made up.

He rode out of the gate as if he were obeying his master's orders to the letter, but turned to the left instead of to the right.

Soon he came to a shed by the roadside which he was on the look-out for. Here he left Satanella, but it was a difficult job to tie her up securely whilst he had the two other horses on his hands. He managed it better than most men would have done, for the beautiful thoroughbreds were accustomed to him, and knew instinctively that he meant no harm.

Having disposed of the mare, he took Panch-bowl's bridle over his arm, and mounting Rob Roy, turned his head in the direction of Thornton Hall.

He pressed on as fast as he could, but it was impossible to dash across country with a led horse hampering his movements. He was consequently obliged to stick to the road, which was a much longer way round.

The horses' hoofs made a loud clatter in the silent lanes, but nobody was there to hear; and George hurried on, his honest heart oppressed with many anxieties, not only on his



young mistress's account, but partly on his own.

As to Mr. Desborough he had rather an admiration for him, for he always maintained that he could sit a horse as well as any gentleman he knew; but Mary told him that she could see by the look in the gentleman's eye that he would never make a good husband for Miss Brenda, so he was bound to do his best to prevent the match.

The good fellow was aware that his present independent line of conduct might cost him an excellent place, but this consideration did not weigh with him for a moment. He was so enthusiastically devoted to Cyril Farquhar that he was content to risk everything for his sake; and it was with a sigh of great relief that he pulled up after half-an-hour's hard riding at the stately portico of Thornton Hall. Whether he failed or not, at least he could tell Mr. Cyril that he had done his best.

"Mr. Farquhar is in the billiard-room with his lordship," the footman informed George curtly, looking as if he thought the groom ought to be anywhere else but at that particular door.

Cyril came out on to the door-step, asking anxiously what was the matter, as soon as he had got the message to say that the groom from The Towers wanted to speak to him. As soon as George had given him a hint as to what was happening at "The Miller's Rest" he muttered an angry oath, caught up his hat, riding crop, and light overcoat, whistled a shrill over his dress things, and jumped into the saddle.

"Take my compliments to Lord Thornton, and tell him that I am called away on an important business. Don't know when I shall be back," he called out to one of the servants, and they started off at a brisk pace through the Park. "Now, George, for the shortest way," and he put Punchbowl at a five-barred gate.

Helter-skelter across anything that came in his way, Cyril rode as if for his life, and George followed with some inward trepidation, knowing that this was rather a dangerous game to play at night, when the shadows were so dense, and the moonlight so deceptive, but determined to break his neck if his master thought it worth while to fracture his own. It was with very little breath left, and an increased temperature that they both landed at last in the lane, a few hundred yards from their destination.

George stayed behind to release Satanella, whilst Cyril dashed on to the inn, as if every hope in life depended on his speed. What followed has been told before. Only the briefest statement having been made by George, Cyril was at a loss to explain to himself why Brenda ever had got herself into such a compromising position, and at last a fear lest he were doing her some injustice, or rather a hope, made him break the silence.

"Was it by your own wish that you went to 'The Miller's Rest' with that scoundrel?" he asked gravely, as they rode up the park.

"No; I had meant to ride with Lord Pinkerton, but when I came down everyone had gone except—except Mr. Desborough, Eric, and Mrs. Wyndham."

"You might have stayed at home."

"He would have stayed with me, and, remember, Eric had promised to meet me later on with Mrs. Wyndham—and given me George to take care of me. Oh, I was duped completely!" her voice breaking.

Cyril said nothing, only he drew his brows together fiercely, and ground his teeth.

"You will come in?" she said, appealingly, when they drew rein at the open door of "The Towers," feeling as if she could not face the fire of questions that would be sure to greet her without his support.

"Yes, I've got something to say to Eric," dismounting quickly so as to help her. "This sort of thing will never happen again. To that I'd take my oath."

And with a very stern face he walked up

the steps, and into the spacious hall, taking no notice of any of the servants as he went across towards the door of the dining-room, his hat on his head, his riding-crop grasped viciously in his right hand.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE were a good many people seated round the long table, which was spread with exquisite glass and sparkling silver, lovely exotics, and every delicacy that the French cook thought suited to the occasion.

The merry hum of conversation ceased as Cyril Farquhar stood in the doorway and looked from face to face with stern eyes.

All felt instinctively that there was "something up," and questions waited in vain for answers, and a merry laugh broke off before it was finished, as every head was turned in his direction.

"Hullo, Farquhar!" exclaimed Lord Pinkerton, rising from his chair. "Glad to see you. Good of you to come and join us. We've had such a jolly evening!"

Cyril mechanically took off his hat.

"Can anyone tell me where my cousin is? I want to speak to him at once."

"He hasn't come in yet. Case of spoons, you know, with Mrs. Wyndham, wanted to forget everything else in creation. No use waiting for a man. Do come and liquor up. But, I say," suddenly recollecting himself, "you haven't met Miss Farquhar anywhere about? She threw me over most scandalously, but I should like to know she was safe."

"Miss Farquhar is here," with a glance over his shoulder. "As to the throwing over, it was the other way up, I believe."

"Jove! I call that too bad!" cried the Viscount, excitedly; but before he could get any further, his attention was forcibly arrested by the abrupt entrance of Mrs. Wyndham.

She rushed into the room, passing Cyril without recognising him, and only stopped when she reached the empty chair placed for the master of the house at the bottom of the table.

Her fair hair was tumbling in disorder over her shoulders, her face was white as ashes, her whole slight frame was quivering visibly, as she held on to the back of the chair as if for support. There was a hush of breathless expectancy, whilst she tried to recover her panting breath before speaking.

"Sir Eric has had an accident," she gasped out. "He was thrown from his horse. They carried him into an inn, and I rode off as fast as I could to tell you."

"Is he much hurt?" asked Cyril, stepping forward, whilst Brenda came and stood in the doorway, listening intently to all that passed.

Her anger had been so hot against her guardian, and now it seemed as if Providence had avenged her wrongs too terribly.

"How can I tell?" and Mrs. Wyndham wrung her small hands in helpless agitation.

"There was blood pouring from his temple, and his face looked dreadful," with a shudder.

"And you left him?" in a tone of scornful reproach. "Was there no one to send but you?"

"I didn't ask," pulling herself together with an effort, as she recognised her questioner, and her antagonistic instincts were roused at once. "I daresay you think my reputation of no consequence, Mr. Farquhar! But I do, and I was not going to stay with Sir Eric or any other man at this time of night, whether he wanted me or not."

Cyril looked at her with scornful eyes.

"Strange that you should have such an overpowering amount of discretion at the moment when you wanted it least!" he said, quietly. "May I ask if anyone else had the sense to send for a doctor?"

"Yes, I should think Dr. Whitehead was there by this time," almost sullenly.

"Tell them to get the cart ready at once."

Mrs. Seddon had better come with me," he said to Markham.

"Shall I go, Cyril?" whispered Brenda, looking up into his face with anxious eyes. "I was so angry with him, but—but I should like to tell him that I forgive him!"

"More than I do!" as a glance of passionate anger shot from his blue eyes. "No; if I could help it you should never go near him again!"

Then he turned to Mrs. Wyndham, remembering the courtesy that was due to her, and begged her to sit down and have some champagne to refresh her, and some supper to support her.

She thanked him meekly, remembering, in her turn, that if anything happened to Sir Eric, his cousin would be master of the house. She astonished the rest of the guests, who had all dropped their knives and forks as if by general consent, by eating a very good supper, plaintively remarking, every now and then, that she must eat something, or she should die.

She seemed to think some chicken *mayonnaise* was not half enough to avert the catastrophe, but indulged in a cold omelet, and nearly a plateful of an elaborate sweet as well.

Cyril watched her with positive disgust, mentally contrasting her with Brenda, who leant against the frame of the door, looking as if she were going to drop down on the floor.

Silently he put a plate with some cold chicken and a glass of champagne on a side-table, and pulling forward a chair, motioned to her to sit down and eat.

She shook her head, but he would not take a refusal—standing over her till she had taken up her knife and fork. His care was very sweet to her, but she could not help thinking that it was due to his sense of duty, not to his love, as it used to be.

"It is so very strange that Farquhar should be thrown," remarked Lord Pinkerton, as he picked up an olive off a glass dish at his right hand. "I thought he could sit any horse in creation."

"Did Trumpeter shy?—or how was it?" asked Cyril, thoughtfully.

"No, the horse did nothing. Eric called out something about somebody standing in front of him. I hardly know what he said, and before I could ask him he swerved to one side—the left—and fell to the ground. I was so frightened I screamed as loud as I could, and they heard me at an inn close by."

"Was it 'The Miller's Rest'?" asked Brenda, eagerly, anxious to think that Eric had not wilfully deceived her after all.

"No, 'The Rose and Crown'; quite in a different direction. Poor Eric said we must not tread too closely on yours and Lord Pinkerton's heels," not having an idea that she and Miss Farquhar had both been equally taken in.

"Don't know what he meant by it," said the Viscount, with a red face. "Miss Farquhar took precious good care not to have anything to do with me!"

"No," said Cyril, who stood close to the door, listening for the first sound of the dog-cart's wheels on the gravel; "you went off with some other lady, and left my cousin in the lurch."

"Miss Farquhar, I appeal to you," cried Lord Pinkerton, looking over his shoulder.

"No, no, don't bother her now!" quickly. "Is that old woman never coming?" to the butler.

"I think Mrs. Seddon is getting a few things together that she thought might be wanted, sir," said Markham, respectfully.

"Shall I come with you, Farquhar?" asked Lord Pinkerton, whose good qualities, as his wife said, always came to the fore on such occasions.

"No, thanks. I shall take my cousin's man with me, and we'll bring him back with us if we can. Oh, here you are!" as Mrs. Seddon's plump form appeared in the hall, having just emerged from the door which led to



["I WILL TAKE YOU HOME," CYRIL SAID; "AND AS FOR YOU, MR. DESBOROUGH, I WILL SETTLE WITH YOU LATER ON!"]

the servants' department. "Have you everything that we want?"

"Oh, Mr. Cyril! what a bad business!" two large tears running down her cheeks. "And what a special Providence it is that sent you home at the right time!"

Cyril grasped her hand kindly, then hurried across the hall, and got into the dog-cart.

At a sign from him George took the place beside his master, whilst the housekeeper and Whistler, the valet, sat behind.

The horse started off at a good pace, and those who had come to the door to show their sympathy turned away from it, and began to think it would be wise to go to bed.

Brenda was making her way to the staircase wearily, when she was intercepted by Lord Pinkerton.

"What did Farquhar mean by saying that you did not throw me over, Miss Farquhar? I can't go to bed till I know," he said, hastily.

"Only this, Lord Pinkerton; that you threw me over instead," very quietly.

"I deny it absolutely. I never was so upset in my life! What the deuce—I beg your pardon—what on earth made you ask me to come if you didn't want me?"

"But I did want you," leaning against the banisters. "Only it is rather beneath me to confess it, when you preferred Miss McIntosh."

"Preferred one of those girls to you? I'm not quite so mad as that! But I'm determined to get to the bottom of this," fumbling in his waistcoat pocket, and bringing out a small note. "Perhaps you will tell me the meaning of this?"

And he read out:

"I hope you won't be huffed because my cousin has changed her mind. She is dying to have Desborough to ride with her, but was too shy to say so. So will you take pity on Jac McIntosh?" "E. F."

"There is not a word of truth in it!"

"Liar!—confounded, detestable liar! I'll give it him when he comes back!" he cried, his face purple with rage.

"Hush! Remember his accident!"

"I don't care a hang! He deserves to break his neck, and I wish to Heaven he had! He's cheated me out of the only thing I've looked forward to for years!"

"You can't have cared—really," and without waiting for an answer she pursued her way upstairs.

She was thankful to get to the quiet of her own room, although she had no intention of going to bed, having made up her mind that she ought to stay up in case Sir Eric were brought back to be nursed in his own home.

Mary helped her to change her habit for a tea-gown of pale blue cashmere; and then she threw herself down on a sofa, and sent her maid away.

She put her hands to her throbbing temples, and thought over all that had happened to her.

Did Eric really think that she would stay at that inn, at the risk of a fearful amount of scandal, and weakly allow herself to be forced into a marriage against her will?

It was disgusting of him to play such a trick on her, but so unutterably foolish as well, because she had told him so very plainly that nothing on earth should induce her to marry Mr. Desborough.

How desperately low he had fallen before resorting to such a shameful scheme for getting rid of his ward! He seemed to have changed completely since his grandfather's death, and yet Sir Peter's will gave him all that he desired.

If Cyril had been made the heir that would have explained Sir Eric's jealousy of him—a jealousy which was only the growth of recent years; for when they were boys together they were always good friends.

There was a tap at the door, and Mrs. Wyndham walked in, still dressed in her

riding-habit, and with her hair hanging over her shoulders. She looked tired and worn to the last degree, and Brenda felt a throb of real compassion for her as she got up from the sofa, imagining that she was grieving over Sir Eric's accident. She was therefore immensely astonished when she raised her haggard eyes and asked where Mr. Desborough was.

"At 'The Miller's Rest,' I believe," she answered, shortly.

"I've been taken in and duped!" and the widow clasped her hands together in a state of intense agitation. "I thought you were above that sort of thing. But you told me yourself that you were going to ride with Lord Pinkerton."

"I know I did; and it was the truth. But my guardian chose to take upon himself to tell Lord Pinkerton that I wished to ride with Mr. Desborough. I was as disgusted as I could be; but it was too late to make a fuss."

"What happened? How did you get rid of him?" eagerly.

"He took me to 'The Miller's Rest,' where he said you and Eric were going to join us."

"Oh, what a dreadful lie! But go on."

"Cyril came and took me away—that's all."

"All!" excitedly. "But there must have been a quarrel? Neither of them is meek as a lamb. What did they say to each other?"

"I can't recollect. Something about explaining in a few days."

"Unhappy girl! You'll be the death of one of them, if not of both!" and Mrs. Wyndham hid her face in her hands.

"The death of them?" starting back, and turning deadly pale. "What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean that they'll fight! There's not the slightest doubt of it! Oh, Paul! Paul!" sobbing convulsively as she dropped down on a chair, "would to Heaven I could save you!"

(To be continued.)





"GERTIE IS ALL I HAVE! I ONLY LIVE FOR HER SAKE, AND YOU HAVE COME TO PART US!"

#### NOVELETTE.]

### THE MYSTERY OF MARTON GRANGE.

—X—

#### CHAPTER I.

It was June—the loveliest of English months. Summer was at its height; the roses bloomed in the cottage gardens round about Marton. The station-master's garden was bright with carnations and verbenas. The sun shone warmly on to the little rural platform; and, as Iris Daryl alighted from the London train, she thought her lot had fallen in pleasant lines when she answered Mrs. Nairn's advertisement, and was engaged as governess at Marton Grange.

Anything more unlike one's pre-conceived notions of an instructress it would have been hard to find.

Iris was not quite nineteen; her hair had a bright tint which made it glitter like burnished gold in the sunshine; her eyes were dark, intense blue, but her brows and lashes were both black, and her skin was almost colourless.

Things had gone hardly with her since her father's death. Three years of drudgery as junior teacher in a fashionable school had taken some of the buoyancy from her step, and shadowed her open brow; but still she was strangely childlike for her eighteen years, and her smile had in it something wonderfully winning. It seemed almost as though nature had given the girl the charm of gaining love and affection for herself, since there was no one left in the wide world of whom she could demand either as a matter of right and justice.

"Can you tell me the way to Marton Grange?" she asked the solitary porter, in a voice whose musical accent betrayed that there

had been something un-English in her bringing up. "Is it very far?"

The man rubbed his head, and looked puzzled, stared at the young lady, and at last asked another question instead of answering hers.

"Sure you don't want to go there, miss? Strangers never go to Marton Grange nowadays!"

There was something in his tone which proved his words were not meant as an impertinence, but were the simple expression of his thoughts.

Iris shivered even in the summer sunshine. There was a significant stress on the word "never" which made her think less hopefully of her lot.

"I am going to live at Marton Grange," she said, quietly; "and I should be very glad if you will show me the way there. Mrs. Nairn is expecting me."

Still the bewildered look on the man's face, still the amazed surprise in his manner.

"You cross over the stile, and keep to the path across the fields," he directed. "It's a matter of three miles, and you can't miss the way. If you take your bag with you, I'll give the box to the carrier in the morning; but you'll never stay there!"

Iris was not given to idle curiosity, nor yet to talking to strangers, yet she could not refrain from speaking once more to the man.

"Why not?"

He turned away sheepishly.

"Reckon you'll find out soon enough, miss, without my telling you!"

It was not a propitious commencement.

Iris had to think over all the advantages of the place again and again before she could shake off the impression of the porter's words.

It had seemed to her a perfect fortune when she obtained Mrs. Nairn's situation. She had been sadly overworked at Kensington, and the principal, a good woman in the main, if rather

fond of exacting too much from her subordinates, told her she must make a change.

Miss Daryl was welcome to stay at Cambridge House till she found something else, but she had far better seek an easier situation. A week later appeared the advertisement which offered a "quiet country home and liberal salary to a young lady who would undertake the education of a little girl of nine." Iris had answered it, without much hope, stating her qualifications, and giving Miss Stone as reference.

The reply was astounding. It came by return of post, and engaged her at once at a salary of a hundred a-year!

Miss Stone was delighted. She assured Iris Marton was in the healthiest part of Yorkshire, and she would soon get well and strong in the fresh, country air.

As to Iris, it seemed a dream. A hundred a-year for the care of one child, when she had taught twenty (that was the number of Miss Stone's junior class) for sixteen. It seemed to her a fortune.

She would not let the porter's manner damp her content. Caution whispered to her she knew absolutely nothing of Mrs. Nairn, who might turn out an adventuress, for aught she could tell; hope retorted! Miss Stone had considered things perfectly satisfactory, and she was an experienced woman of the world.

Iris determined to look on the bright side of things. As to nobody going to Marton Grange, that would hardly affect her. Perhaps Mrs. Nairn was a widow, and had lived in great seclusion since her husband's death. Anyway, she would not begin by taking up foolish fancies; and this wise resolve brought her into a long, winding lane, evidently the high road from Marton to the next village, since a waggon was lumbering along.

Iris stopped, and asked the driver if she was on the way to Marton Grange. He answered "Yes," but there was an amazement on his

face which told her he shared the porter's surprise at her destination.

She walked on bravely. Fresh beauties met her at every step. The hedge on either side was radiant with wild flowers. Beyond lay the cornfields, where scarlet poppies raised their heads fearlessly among the wheat. There was not a building of any kind in sight; only the cloudless blue sky above her head, and all nature's marvels around.

Iris forgot the porter's strange manner, and gave herself up to the delights of the scene.

Never since she came to England had she been so much at home. After three years in a London suburb it was simply bliss to wander of her own sweet will down that picturesque lane. She must surely be happy at Marton, just for the beauties around her.

The next curve in the lane brought her to a low, red brick cottage, from whose gabled chimneys the smoke rose cheerfully. A woman stood at the gate in a sun-burnt, looking down the lane. Iris stopped involuntarily. The thought came that she might have reached her destination.

"Is this Marton Grange?"

"Yes, miss," returned the woman, pleasantly. "This is the new governess?"

Iris admitted her identity.

"The master have gone to meet you," replied the lodge keeper, civilly. "Happened he was late. You've only to keep to the avenue, miss, and you'll soon be at the house. My boy's out or I'd send him to point out the way."

Iris declared this was needless, and turned into the chestnut avenue with an intense relief that at last she had met a person who did not express surprise at her arrival. The woman's words had been reassuring too. Her employers had cared enough about her comfort to send to meet her, and this was pleasant.

Mrs. Nairn was not a widow, so there must be some other reason for her secluded habits. Perhaps she was an invalid.

The avenue ended abruptly, and Iris found herself in a beautifully kept flower garden, with thick trees bounding it in every direction save one corner, where stood a little white gate, evidently of modern origin. She tried to open it, and found it locked. There was nothing for it but to ring at the bell and wait for admittance.

She had to wait some time. She had ample leisure to notice the lack of harmony between the rough, clumsily-constructed gate and the exquisite beauty of the grounds; evidently some trees had been felled to make way for the gate. Mrs. Nairn must have an unconquerable dread of society, if she required such a barricade between her and the lovely approach to her home.

Another moment, and with a jangling noise—as though it was not used to the operation, and entered a protest—the gate rolled slowly back; a woman in a trim black gown and spotless white apron made way for Miss Daryl with a low courtesy.

Reader, have you ever taken a dislike to a person at first sight without the slightest cause or pretext? Have you afterwards accused yourself of prejudice, and got over the instinct sufficiently to trust that person until time recalled to you your first impression was the right one? I believe myself these so-called prejudices are instincts given to us for self-preservation. I never in my life shuddered, on meeting a stranger, without later on finding in that creature a foe to my peace.

I have been called "fanciful," "superstitious," and the like. I don't care. I recognize what people term my "prejudices" as warnings. I don't abuse the people against whom these "warnings" come. I don't strive to injure them in word or deed, but this much I do attempt—to avoid them.

Well, Miss Daryl who had come so hopefully to Yorkshire, who would not be depressed by the porter's communication nor the waggoner's amazement, yet shivered in the summer sunshine as Janet Thwaites held

open the gate for her. A foreboding of evil seized her on the spot.

And yet most people would have taken Janet for the ideal of an old-fashioned servant. There was no attempt at being above her position—no shadow of patronage in her greeting of the governess. She was a woman whose age it was impossible to guess. She was between thirty and fifty-five; but whereabouts in the quarter of a century between to fix her age you could not tell.

She was tall, and had no figure. If you had taken a lengthy bolster (an attenuated one, with not too many feathers) and tied it in loosely—oh, very loosely, about a quarter of the way down—you would have had a very good idea of Janet Thwaites. She always wore black. It was never old and never new. You always had a kind of feeling her clothes must have been made a very long time ago, and yet you could never have called them shabby.

The face was long and square in shape, with a somewhat massive jaw. It was of one colour—a description which, perhaps, needs explaining. There are some faces which never flush, and never tan, which are not particularly fair, and in youth are deemed pale. As time goes on, this colour fades into a neutral white-brown tint; the lips, instead of their bright red, grow pale by sympathy; the eyebrows and lashes, never very perceptible, fade so as to become quite invisible.

These complexions are not very rare. I have seen some half-dozen in my life (men and women), but I never met a person afflicted with one; and, to my mind, it is an affliction, without discovering some taint or warp in their moral nature.

To return to Janet. Her hair was tow-colour and very scanty. She wore the front in bands down the side of her face; the back was hidden beneath a prim, black cap. The only thing white and fresh about her was her apron, a marvel of snowy calico. Janet's aprons were her strong point, and served a double purpose—not only did they increase materially her demure appearance, but she was apt to derive much occupation from rolling the corners.

If you spoke to the woman ten to one but she was twisting and untwisting the folds of her apron as she answered. She never looked you straight in the face if you were watching her. Sometimes you felt positive her small ferret-like eyes were fixed on you; but if you glanced up, far from detecting her in the act, Janet was seen to be busy with her apron.

"I shall never like that woman!" flashed through Iris Daryl's mind as she answered the servant's respectful greeting, but she only said aloud,—

"Are Mrs. Nairn and her little girl quite well?"

Janet's answer consisted of the same words inverted, so as to answer the question instead of asking it. To my mind nothing is more exasperating than to have one's own sentence as it were distorted and then hurled back at one.

"Mrs. Nairn and her little girl are quite well, ma'am," replied Janet, busy with the folds of her apron. Then, as they entered the house, "Will you go to your own room, ma'am?"

It was so evidently expected that she would do so that Iris agreed, though she was so hungry food would have been welcome, and she longed to get the first interview with her employers over and see what manner of folks she had come to live among.

One thing had struck her—the deserted appearance of the house. Beyond the white gate all seemed beautiful and cared for; passing through it you came on an old-fashioned, square garden, so neglected that only the flowers that come up year by year without touch of the gardener's hand were found there.

The gravel path was covered with weeds, the carnations and everlasting had run wild,

and in some places quite overtopped the path. The house, a large stone building in the early Gothic style, was half covered with ivy, on which no pruning-knife had come for years. The front door sorely needed paint, and the large hall had a weird, lonely aspect.

"I daresay you're tired, ma'am?" said Janet, affably, as Iris consented to go to her room. "Dinner is not till seven; but I'll bring you some tea if you like to lie down a bit and rest yourself."

Kindly words, but Iris did not feel grateful. She wanted to see Mrs. Nairn and her little pupil. Surely the mother might have spared a moment to welcome her after the long journey. She could not tell, since the servant had denied it. But, perhaps—happy thought—she had gone with "the master" to the station.

Iris determined to find out. Overcoming her repugnance to Janet by an effort, she said, pleasantly,—

"This country seems very pretty. I never had a nicer walk than from the station here!"

"Yes, ma'am, the country seems very pretty."

This was exasperating. Had the woman no vocabulary of her own. Must she always phrase her sentences after the model of Iris.

"Is the little girl at home?"

"The little girl is at home, ma'am!"

"I should like to see her?"

"You will see her presently, ma'am," said Janet, to the girl's intense relief, as if wording a sentence for herself, "and if I am not mistaken you'll soon see a great deal too much of her."

With that she flung open the door of a spacious bedroom, and motioned Miss Daryl to enter. Then, with a promise of tea, she disappeared.

Poor Iris!

She was not nineteen. Ever since she came to Kensington as pupil-teacher, three years ago, she had had what one calls a "hard life." It had been much work and little leisure. She had felt her health breaking down with the strain of looking after twenty children under twelve, and three wardrobes.

This situation at Marton had seemed to her hopes a very haven of rest. One little girl to teach, a refined home, and a liberal salary! Yet, as she threw herself wearily on a chair, she felt more dispirited than she had ever done amid the noisy, cheerful bustle at Cambridge House.

What mystery hung over Marton Grange? She was convinced that there was one. She was only a girl in years, but she had quick perceptions and ready intellect.

She felt certain that Marton Grange was not as other homes—that some heavy shadow hung over it. She went to the open window and looked out. The room was at the back of the house. In the distance she saw a beautifully-wooded park and grounds, evidently kept with no mean care; but close to the house all seemed neglected.

It was as though a narrow area round the Grange itself had been given over entirely to nature, and nature, beautiful in her wildness, yet could not compete with the grounds beyond, where art had stepped in, and worked with her hand-in-hand. On the one side of the white gate you saw signs of vast wealth, spent with no niggard hand; on the other all spoke of neglect merging into decay.

With a sigh she closed the window, and sat down.

She had nothing to complain of in the room allotted to her. It was large and airy; but there was something even in its space and loftiness alarming to a solitary girl, who had only, in the last few months, been promoted from supervising a large dormitory of noisy children to a tiny slip of a room, whose solitude was its chief charm.

Why, the large, old-fashioned bedstead in itself measured more square feet than the little room Iris had been so proud to occupy. Its dark crimson hangings had a weird, old-world air; the floor was polished to a dark brown,



and the walls panelled half-way up in the same hue.

There were thick tapestry rugs scattered about, and the furniture was good and massive; but there was nothing homelike or bright about the room.

Iris thought she should never care for it, and its size oppressed her. A large screen, evidently meant to divide it into bedroom and study, was so hideously and grotesquely ugly that the girl half-shuddered; and the large sofa had such a stiff-set air that it would have seemed almost treason to recline on it.

There was a good-sized table placed near the window, and a huge arm-chair drawn up to it.

In this Iris ensconced herself, wishing very much she might go to bed, instead of an hour and-a-half later joining her employers at the late dinner.

She wondered if it was incumbent on her to change her dress. Her box was not yet come; but in her bag were lace ruffles and ribbons, by the help of which, perhaps, her quiet black cashmere would pass muster.

Oh! if only Mrs. Nairn would come and let her get the first introduction over.

She was not left alone long, ten minutes at the utmost, and Janet Thwaites returned, bearing a tray of refreshments.

The ham sandwiches were a picture in themselves, so nice and tempting did they look piled on a snowy damask napkin. The coffee reminded Iris of the coffee of her childhood, when she and her father had wandered together through foreign lands. She had tasted none like it since coming to England. The cream jug and sugar-basin were of silver, the china of delicate white porcelain.

Iris ate and drank, and felt refreshed.

"Dinner will be at seven, ma'am," said Janet, civilly, "you'll hear the gong!"

Clearly there was nothing more to be gained, so Iris let her depart; and then, her vague fears vanishing as the sorely-needed nourishment refreshed and strengthened her, the girl began her simple toilet, resolving bravely that she would not be one of those fanciful, hysterical governesses who are always imagining slights, and that Mrs. Nairn could hardly be so very inconsiderate since she had given directions for her reception.

Very likely she was tired, and did not care to see a stranger, or she might be busy. In fact, Iris had talked herself quite into a cheerful frame of mind, and made a dozen good excuses for Mrs. Nairn's non-appearance before the gong rang out its dreary summons; and she turned to leave her room, hoping some good chance would enlighten her as to the direction of the dining-room, since at present she had not the faintest idea of its whereabouts.

She made a pretty picture as she went slowly down the broad, oaken staircase.

Iris wore her plain black dress; but she had draped the front with an old lace handkerchief, knotting it at the bosom with a bow of crimson ribbons, and the sun fell on her hair, giving it a golden glory. She might have been taken for some fair young daughter of the old house rather than a poor little governess, whom no one had deemed it worth their while to welcome.

She paused at the foot of the stairs, wondering which way to turn. There was no sign of a servant to show her the dining-room. No pleasant rattle of glass and dinner betrayed the neighbourhood of that apartment.

"Miss Daryl, I believe?"

She looked up. A gentleman stood facing her with grave, earnest face. He wore the regulation black evening suit, and there was a late white rouseband in his button-hole.

He was a strikingly handsome man, dark, and abundant brown hair, large, expressive eyes, features well-out and faultlessly regular; but there was something a trifle hard about his mouth, and Iris felt, as she met his eyes, that they could look very cruelly on anyone who offended him.

He smiled graciously at her evident hesitation.

"I must introduce myself," he said, slowly, "I am George Nairn, and I am very glad to welcome you to Marton Hall. My wife is not coming to dinner to-night, so you must accept me as your guide to the room where we take our meals."

Nothing could have been more perfect than his manner. His courtesy never bordered on familiarity. He mentioned his wife's absence as a matter of course, evidently thinking it quite natural the governess should dine *à tête* with himself.

Iris felt it would be mock humility to object, so she accepted Mr. Nairn's arm and went in with him to dinner.

A surprise awaited her. The repast was laid for three, and the third person was already seated in the master's place at the head of the table—an old man, with long, shaggy white hair and fierce, angry expression. He was very old and very feeble. Iris saw that at once, and then a dumb fear assailed her. Was he quite in his mind?

Mr. Nairn understood at once.

"Have no fear," he said, gently. "My uncle is very old and nearly helpless, but he retains his intellect as clear as ever. Unfortunately, he is very deaf, almost entirely so, so I fear it is useless to introduce you. Sir Douglas is the true master of Marton Grange. My wife and I are only his guests."

The dinner proceeded. It was perfectly served, and Sir Douglas showed a tolerable amount of interest in his choice of the various dishes. He spoke very seldom, and never looked at Iris until the dessert was on the table. Then he seemed to remember her existence, and stared at her with a scrutiny more eager than pleasant.

"Who's that girl, George?"

Sir Douglas being deaf himself was apt to fancy his friends were similarly afflicted; his intended whispers were usually audible at a long distance.

Iris heard the question perfectly and, blushed crimson. Mr. Nairn gave her an apologetic glance before he answered his uncle.

"That's Gertie's governess."

He spoke very slowly and in a high key, but it had to be repeated several times before it reached the old man's ear.

"Gertie's governess!" said Sir Douglas, musingly, and speaking as coolly as though the young lady in question were not at his elbow. "And a very pretty girl, too. But Gertie has no need of a governess, George. I've told you that time after time. The child'll never live to want book learning. All she needs is to know how to get to Heaven, and maybe she knows that now without any teaching."

Mr. Nairn turned to Iris sadly.

"And he speaks thus of my only child. A dozen times a day I have to listen to it. Confess, Miss Daryl, I need to be a patient man?"

Iris looked her sympathy.

"Is your little girl so delicate, really?"

Mr. Nairn paused.

"I don't believe it," he said, slowly. "I never did; but the old man has made up his mind she is going to die, and I am afraid he has converted my wife to his fears. Mrs. Nairn is a very nervous woman."

"Most mothers are anxious about the health of only children."

"Which proves that only children are a mistake," said Mr. Nairn, slowly. "Miss Daryl, if you can do anything to cheer and brighten my wife, you will be doing a real service, and one of far more value to us than turning out my little Gertie a learned lady."

He spoke so earnestly that Iris began to pity him. He could not have a very lively home, poor man, with old Sir Douglas ever prophesying evil, and his wife a nervous, fanciful woman.

Iris thought she understood the condition of things at the Grange now, and asked,—

"Is Mrs. Nairn well herself?"

"My wife enjoys perfect health—bodily."

He made such an ominous pause before the last word that Iris felt frightened, seeing which, he added hastily,—

"My dear young lady, my poor wife can inspire you with nothing but pity and affection. She is a very sweet-tempered woman, but she lives only in her affections. She was never of strong intellect, and the successive loss of three children has altered her terribly. She seems as if nothing could make up to her for the little ones who are gone. She lives only now for Gertrude. I don't think she has a thought, an idea, not concentrated in the child."

Iris felt her heart ache for the bereaved mother.

"I do not wonder," she said, warmly. "It must be a terrible blow for a mother to lose three children."

Mr. Nairn looked a trifle grave.

"And is it nothing for a man to lose his boys and see his wife sinking into a confirmed, morbid invalid, because she makes no effort to throw off her grief? Heaven knows I sympathize with my wife; but, Miss Daryl, there is such a thing as sorrowing overmuch. Since the day her youngest boy died, Mrs. Nairn has refused to cross the threshold. She has never passed through the lodge-gates since our boy was carried through them to his funeral. She never opens a book. She never writes a letter. She sits for hours with Gertrude on her lap, neither of them uttering a word. They were both fading like two flowers on one stalk. There was nothing for it but to exert my authority. The life was bad for my wife. It was killing the child. There was no help for it but to advertise for a governess."

Iris trembled. A most unwelcome fear had occurred to her. Could it be that Mrs. Nairn was opposed to the scheme? Had she objected to the advertisement, and did she mean to treat the governess as an interloper? It really looked like it. Iris fancied this explained Mrs. Nairn's mysterious absence. She longed more than ever to get the first meeting with Gertie and her mother safely over.

She rose. She had eaten some early strawberries, and little as she knew of English etiquette, she was aware ladies did not linger while gentlemen took their time. It was passing hard to be there alone—to have to take her own position. She rose quietly and asked Mr. Nairn,—

"May I go to Mrs. Nairn now?"

"I will take you myself."

Janet remained behind. Iris felt she saw a scornful smile pass over the woman's face as she followed Mr. Nairn from the room.

They went back to the entrance hall, down a long corridor to the left wing of the house. Mr. Nairn knocked at a green-painted door, but no answer came. He took a pass key from his pocket, unlocked the door, and Iris found herself in a very prettily-furnished drawing-room.

Here all was bright and tasteful. You would not have expected to find such a room in the old Grange. It was divided into two by rich Eastern curtains drawn quite closely, and from the other side of these Iris heard a sweet voice singing,—

"Rose of the garden, blushing and gay,  
Soon as we pluck thee fading away."

A frown crossed Mr. Nairn's face.

"I hope you have good spirits, Miss Daryl. I warn you you will need them here!" Then pushing aside the curtains he held them back for her to enter.

To her life's end Iris Daryl never forgot that scene. The room was beautiful as fairy-land; the evening sunshine fell upon it, lighting it up with a soft brilliance. But she saw nothing of the art treasures, the triumph of upholsterer's skill displayed around. She had eyes only for the living figures in the picture.

In a low chair sat a young woman dressed

in white muslin, her broad, black ribbons alone marking that she was in mourning.

At her feet, her head pillowed in her lap, reclined a white-robed child. The resemblance between them was marvellous. The same pale golden hair; the same pale, colourless complexion; the same china blue eyes. But while the child's face was bright and hopeful the mother's was sad, with a dumb despair stamped upon its still features. There was no animation, no spirit, in Mrs. Nairn's countenance. Beautiful she must be ever, but it was more the beauty of a statue than of a living, breathing woman.

Iris stood spell-bound. Never had she seen such a lovely pair, never had she seen such a sad picture. Mr. Nairn's voice fell upon her ears, and the spell was broken.

"Helen," he said, quietly, and Iris noticed his voice betrayed no sign of emotion, or even of impatience. "Helen, this is Miss Daryl, the young lady you engaged as governess to our little Gertrude."

Mrs. Nairn never moved or spoke. Poor Iris wondered what to do. She advanced a step nearer and held out her hand.

"I shall do my best," she said, gently. "I am so fond of children, and they generally like me."

Helen Nairn looked at her slowly, a strange distrust gleaming in her light blue eyes.

"Where have I seen you before?"

The question took Iris by surprise.

"I do not think you can have seen me. I only came to England three years ago, and, since that, I have been teaching in a school."

"Have you a mother?"

"I cannot remember her. My father was all I had, and I lost him three years ago."

Mrs. Nairn's face softened just a shade.

"You loved him then? You were always together; you were all he had?"

"Yes, we were never parted for a day."

Mrs. Nairn put one hand on her child's head.

"Gertie is all I have—my life, my joy, my all! I only live for her sake, and you have come to part us."

Iris forgot Mr. Nairn's presence, forgot the pity she had felt for him in his domestic trials. She could only think of that heart-broken mother. She flung herself at Helen's feet, and took her hand.

"I could not part you and Gertie, Mrs. Nairn, if I wished it ever so. You are mistress in your own house, and I am only here to obey your wishes. If you really object to me, I will go away to-morrow; but I was so tired of school-life, the work there is so hard. It seemed like a holiday to come here and have only one little girl to teach."

A small voice interposed.—

"I like her face, mother," said Gertie, simply. "And her hair's like the angels' in my picture-book. Let the pretty lady stay, mother dear, to please me."

Mr. Nairn had turned on his heel and left the room. Iris did not remark till days later that neither wife nor child had once addressed him.

"You see," said Helen Nairn, sadly, "you have turned her heart against me already."

"No," pleaded Iris, "she won't love you less because she has someone else to care for her, dear Mrs. Nairn. A child's heart is not so small it can only hold one person. If you will let me try, I think I can win Gertie's affection. But she can never love me I know, of course, as she does her father and mother."

"She has got no father," said Mrs. Nairn hastily, to Miss Daryl's bewilderment.

"She meant Mr. Nairn," said Gertie, quickly. "Perhaps she does not know, mother," added the little girl, with a strange intuition.

The mother looked at Iris.

"If only he had not brought you I might have liked you. You are so young, and you look kind and merciful."

"Indeed, I hope you will try to like me," pleaded poor Iris. "I have not a friend in Yorkshire. My life will be sadly lonesome and

dreary, Mrs. Nairn, if you and Gertie will not like me just a little."

"Did you ever see Mr. Nairn before?" demanded Gertie. "What made you come here?"

"I did not even know there was a Mr. Nairn," replied Iris. "I answered an advertisement in the *Times*, and a letter came, saying that Mrs. Nairn had engaged me as governess to her little girl. I don't know how I got the notion, but I fancied Mrs. Nairn was a widow."

"Then you are not his spy?" asked Helen. "Indeed, indeed," said Iris, "I am not. I came here believing I should have a happy home with a lady and a little girl. I never dreamed of being a spy."

The next question was bewildering.

"What do you think of Mr. Nairn?"

"I don't know," said poor Iris. "He seems very anxious about Gertie—and about you."

"Did he try to make you think me mad?"

"Oh, no. He told me you were very sweet-

tempered, but that trouble had made you sad and quiet."

Helen took the girl's hand and drew her nearer.

"I am going to trust you, Miss Daryl," she said, simply. "I am too weary and too heartsick to reason about it; but I know I like your face. You will be true to me, won't you, and protect my child?"

"I will indeed."

The woman, whose great sorrow was stamped upon her brow, stooped and kissed the girl whose life romance was all to come. The caress sealed the compact; these two henceforth were friends, the fair-haired child the great link between them.

Iris went to bed that night resolved that whatever mystery overshadowed Marton Grange she would never leave the house of her free will while her staying could comfort Mrs. Nairn and Gertie.

Then, as she brushed out her sunny hair, and caught a glimpse of her face in the glass, it flashed upon her why Mrs. Nairn had thought her features so familiar—they were her own.

Iris, in her humility, never dreamed she could be as beautiful as the sad, pale mother. Her hair was a deeper gold, her eyes a darker blue, her complexion a different type, her expression brighter. But for all that, the shape of the face, the style of the features, was the same. If sorrow ever bleached her hair and dulled the expression, why then—save for her dark eyes and their black lashes—her countenance would be identical with Mrs. Nairn's!

What did it mean? Her father had been an only child. Her mother had no sister. How in the world could she, a little lonely orphan, have aught in common with the wealthy mistress of Marton?

But at last Iris laid her weary head on her pillow. Her last waking thought was that whatever mystery hung over the Grange, her own course was clearly to comfort Mrs. Nairn, and help her to cheer the little child whom old Sir Douglas had said was only fit for Heaven.

## CHAPTER II.

Iris woke the next morning with a vague recollection that something had happened.

She sat up in bed and looked round the room, so different from her tiny sanctum at Kensington. She missed the buzz of girlish voices in the next apartment, the clanging of the big bell which daily roused the inhabitants of Cambridge House, and bit by bit the truth came back to her. This was Marton Grange, and she was governess to Gertrude Nairn, whom her mother declared had no father.

Iris thought over the whole scene, pondered over every incident of the evening before, and came to her conclusion quickly enough.

Mrs. Nairn disliked and distrusted her hus-

band. Between the master and mistress of this beautiful home a great gulf yawned, and it had been caused in some strange way by their own child.

Mr. Nairn had said the Grange belonged to Sir Douglas, but it was easy to see that he ennobled the part of master. Could it be that, viewing the estate as his own, he mourned that he had no son to come after him? Was it possible he would rather have parted with little Gertrude and saved one of her brothers? Could he have let this reach his wife; and, in her weak, nervous state, poor woman, had she taken up the notion he wished ill to the child?

Wild as this theory seemed, it was the only one Iris could think of.

At dinner the night before she had been half inclined to pity Mr. Nairn; but since she had seen his wife all her sympathy was for the mother and child.

Surely, plausible as was his manner, polished as his courtesy towards herself, George Nairn must have failed grievously in some duty towards his wife before she could gravely assert in his very presence that his child was fatherless—before she could have taught Gertrude herself to speak of him as "Mr. Nairn."

Iris wished she had remembered to inquire the hour of breakfast. None of the family looked like early risers. Still it was better to be prepared, and so it was barely eight o'clock when Miss Daryl went downstairs in her pretty grey morning-gown, a knot of cherry-coloured ribbons at her throat, looking the brightest thing that had been seen at Marton Grange for many a day.

Janet Thwaites was standing at the dining-room door as Iris passed. Her apron seemed to require a great deal of attention this morning.

"What time is breakfast?" asked Iris, pleasantly.

"Whatever time you like, miss," replied the woman, civilly. "Mrs. Nairn and Miss Gertrude never come to it, and the master is mostly with Sir Douglas. You can have it in half-an-hour, if that'll do."

Iris said it would, and went out into the fresh air, feeling the shadow on the house must be greater now than she had feared, if none of the family ever met at meals.

She was walking round the foreign-looking verandah which ran along three sides of the house. Most of the rooms opened on to it with glass doors. Climbing ivy and monthly roses crept over the woodwork. Here and there were chairs. Iris was just going to sit down and enjoy the view when a voice called her.

"Miss Daryl!"

She turned in the direction of the sound, and to her amazement saw Mrs. Nairn and Gertrude. They wore summer dresses of white holland and broad, black ribbons. The almost transparent delicacy of their complexions struck Iris yet more by daylight.

"I am so glad to see you out!" she said, gaily, when she had kissed Gertrude, and shaken hands with Mrs. Nairn. "Janet told me you never got up till after breakfast."

"Janet must have wilfully deceived you," said Mrs. Nairn, quietly. "She knows I am always in the grounds at this time. I have told them to lay breakfast for you with us in my parlour, Miss Daryl, unless you would prefer the dining room?"

"I would much rather be with you."

"We have a few minutes still; let me show you the view from the back of the house. It is generally admired very much."

And wall it might be. Standing high, the Grange overlooked a wide prospect. The Yorkshire moors rose on one side, far away on the other rolled the sea. Iris felt the tears come into her eyes.

"It is so very beautiful!" she said, half apologetically. "I never thought England could be so lovely!"

"My child," said Helen, sadly, "don't cry because things are beautiful; save your tears



for real troubles. What is it, Gertie?" for the child was pulling at her sleeve.

"Mother, he has just come out!"

Mrs. Nairn turned abruptly.

"We will go in. I can show you more another time. What do you think of the Grange, Miss Daryl?"

"It is the loveliest place I ever saw!"

"Ah! How old are you?"

"Just eighteen."

They were sitting at breakfast now; Mrs. Nairn presiding with a quiet grace which proved, no matter how trouble had depressed her, her good taste and delicate perception of a hostess's duties were quite unimpaired.

"When I was eighteen," she said, as she handed Iris her coffee, "I was like you. I believe I thought no place in the world could be so beautiful as this! You see, it was my home."

Iris started.

"Then you came here a bride?" wondering whether in those days Mr. Nairn had been less distasteful to his wife.

"No; I lived here all my childhood. I was eight years old when Uncle Douglas brought me here from my father's death-bed. I grew up as his own daughter, and I think no girl ever had a happier childhood. It almost breaks my heart when I think how different things are for Gertie!"

The child stole one little hand into her mother's.

"I am quite happy while I have you!" the action seemed to say.

Iris listened eagerly, hoping Mrs. Nairn would make some allusion to her husband, but none came, and presently they left the room, and went back to the verandah.

"I was thinking about you all last night," said Mrs. Nairn, quietly, when Gertie and her doll were out of hearing, "and the more I thought, the more bewildered I grew!"

"It is so simple," pleaded Iris, "if you would only believe me! Mr. Nairn advertised for a governess. The situation sounded just such an one as I was seeking, and I applied for it. I never had an idea, when I reached Marton, but that you had engaged me; in fact, I believed you were a widow!"

"I believe you!" said Helen, pressing one hand wearily to her aching head. "I like your voice, it sounds so true. But, Miss Daryl, it is *his* conduct, not *yours*, that so amazes me!"

"I think he feared you and Gertie were growing too used to sadness," said Iris, gently. "Perhaps he thought a governess would rouse her."

Mrs. Nairn shook her head.

"If you only knew!"

A strange impulse seized on Iris. Looking up into Mrs. Nairn's face, she cried,—

"Can you not trust me? Young and inexperienced as I am, I knew from the moment I set foot in the Grange that it was not as other houses are. I seemed to feel a mystery in the air! I will be true to you in thought and deed if only you will give me your confidence, and let me try to help you!"

"No one can do that!"

"Mr. Nairn told me last night you had lost three children, and that their loss had saddened your whole life. But I cannot help thinking there must be something else."

"There is!"

"I am only a girl," said Iris, "but I can keep a secret. I have not a relation in the world, only an old lawyer, who is my guardian, and whom I have never seen. Mrs. Nairn, I will hold your confidence as something sacred, if only you will give it to me!"

"You will despise me!" said the poor woman, feebly. "And yet it would be a relief to tell someone, just to pour out my grief! But, Miss Daryl, we must be cautious; and if Mr. Nairn once thought you and I were friends, you would leave the house the next day!"

Iris shuddered.

"Is it as bad as that?"

"It is worse!—far worse! I must not

speak more now; later I may tell you all. But, Miss Daryl, let me warn you of two things—Janet Thwaites is *his* spy; all she can find out she carries back to him; and if you want to help me and my child, keep friendly with my husband!"

She had given poor Iris no easy task. Frank and open by nature, the girl hated the very thought of her proposed rôle, but she believed in Helen's wrongs. She would have done anything in the world to serve her; and so when, ten minutes later, Janet summoned her to an interview with Mr. Nairn, she did her utmost to carry out his wife's instructions.

His manner to her was unchanged. The same attentive courtesy, the same silken tone; but Iris fancied, as he shook hands with her, his dark eyes searched her through and through.

"You have made acquaintance with my wife," he said, blandly. "What do you think of her?"

A trying question, but Miss Daryl answered demurely,—

"I think Mrs. Nairn must have been a very beautiful woman!"

Her husband smiled.

"She was the loveliest of her sex! But you have misunderstood my question. I mean, what did you think of her health?"

Which Iris interpreted to mean,—

"What do you think of her sanity? How much has she told you, and how much do you believe?"

"I think she is moping," said Miss Daryl, calmly. "Why don't you take her to the seaside?"

"She won't go. Change of air has been repeatedly advised, but she obstinately refuses to leave home."

"Then get some of her people to stay with her."

"You are fertile in prescriptions, but, unluckily, they are all unavailable. My wife has no 'people,' like myself, she is an orphan and an only child."

"I am quite sure she ought to be roused. If she had not taken such an unfortunate dislike to me, I would have proposed trying to persuade her to go out."

"Then you think she *does* dislike you. I fancied she had taken to you."

Poor Iris tried not to tell a deliberate untruth, and found it very difficult.

"I think Mrs. Nairn would *hate* anyone who came between her and Gertie. She has told me already she means us only to do lessons two hours a day, and that she shall stay in the room all the time."

"Poor Helen! She cannot be a good judge of character if she takes you for a stern disciplinarian," said Mr. Nairn, gallantly.

The look of undisguised admiration which accompanied his words terrified Iris more than anything he had said. Her position at the Grange, in any case, must be a trying one, but it would be simply unbearable if her pupil's father attempted to flirt with her.

"Gertrude is naturally her first thought," said Iris. "Perhaps, when Mrs. Nairn overcomes her prejudice, she may not care always to superintend our studies."

"And you don't mind her interference?"

"I have no right to mind it. A governess expects to find drawbacks to such an eligible situation as this."

"It seems hard lines that *you* should be a governess. But, Miss Daryl, we shall look on you quite as one of the family here. I assure you I shall take it as a pleasure if you will let me do my best to make you happy."

"I am always happy," said Iris, quietly. "I think, Mr. Nairn, life is very much what we make it. Except for my father's death, though I am poor and friendless, I have been happy."

"You must not call yourself friendless any longer. I assure you I should be proud to be your friend, if only in your sweetness you will endeavour to put up with my wife's

caprices. I will do my best that she does not interfere materially with your comfort."

It reminded Iris of Helen's warning that when she left the dining-room she found Jane Thwaites so near the door as to leave no doubt she had been listening.

Nearly a week passed by. Lessons were begun, and Mrs. Nairn mostly lay on her sofa during their progress. She never spoke a word to Iris the whole house might not have overheard. She seemed quite to have forgotten her promise to confide in her. It was only one evening when Mr. Nairn had gone to a dinner-party, and Janet Thwaites was in bed with a bad toothache, that Helen appeared suddenly at Miss Daryl's door.

"Gertie is in bed, there is no one downstairs. For once I can speak without fear. Will you come to my room?"

Iris was wearing a blue dressing-gown, for she had been about to retire to rest. She linked her arm in Mrs. Nairn's and went downstairs with her to the room where they had first met.

A stranger would have taken them for sisters; an artist would have liked to paint them together as "Hope" and "Despair."

Helen Nairn fastened the door carefully, turned down the lamp, and then began her story.

"I can tell it you best in the faint half-light; then, if you despise me, I shall not see the scorn written in your eyes."

"I shall not despise you," said Iris, soothingly. "I have learned to love Gertie so dearly that I *could* not think harshly of her mother."

"I was only your age," said Helen Nairn, wistfully, "when I made my first great mistake. I had never known a care. My life had been all sunshine, for my dear old uncle half worshipped me, and poured out his wealth too gladly to give me pleasure. They told me I was beautiful, that, apart from my future fortune, many a man would have been too happy had I smiled on him. I don't know if that was true, but I do know that the only man I ever cared for—he whom I madly idolized—cast never a thought to my uncle's wealth, but loved me for myself."

Iris stroked the hand she still held caressingly, as she replied,—

"Love such as that must have made you happy. Surely then you had nothing left to wish for? Your lot sounds perfect!"

"It does, indeed. I *was* happy, and my whole life might have been unclouded but for him!"

There was no mistaking the bitter stress upon the pronoun. Iris felt she alluded to her husband.

"He made mischief between you?"

"He did! I must have been mad with folly. George Nairn was my uncle's steward, and, being the son of an old friend, Sir Douglas received him as an equal, and he was often at the Grange. My uncle trusted him in all things, and I believed him worthy of that confidence. He it was ventured to hint to me that Vere Tempest sought me for what I had. Miss Daryl, I cannot explain it to you. I suppose it was infatuation, my cruel suspicions, but I was deceived. I believed the proofs Mr. Nairn brought forward—they seemed so conclusive. There was, indeed, no flaw in his chain of evidence, unless I had been clever enough to guess he invented the whole story."

"It was not for long years after that I knew the truth. I had a stormy interview with my lover. He was proud, and hurt by my want of faith would deny nothing. I might believe what I pleased, he told me; if I could not trust him I was unworthy his love. Miss Daryl, it is more than ten years ago. I have never seen him since, and yet the thought of that parting with Vere Tempest pains me even now."

"It was *his* fault," cried Iris, decidedly, "he ought to have explained."

Mrs. Nairn shook her head.

"I ought to have trusted him. Besides, I

was rich and he was poor. I should have recollected how sensitive that would make him."

"And you married Mr. Nairn?"

"No. I believe he wished it. I think now that was what he plotted for; but he was too wary to excite my suspicions by speaking of his hopes. He went to London for a time on my uncle's business. When he returned it was my wedding-day!"

Iris started.

"You married someone else—not Mr. Nairn?"

"Surely you never thought he was Gertrude's father? Could I speak of him before her as I do if she had been his child?"

Iris felt as though a mist had fallen from her eyes.

"How blind you must have thought me?"

"I thought you very sympathetic for one so young. I can't tell you why I married. Vere's face haunted me. Perhaps I thought I should forget him when I wore someone else's wedding-ring—but I never did."

"And your husband?"

Mrs. Nairn smiled faintly.

"He almost worshipped me. He was years older than I, a banker of enormous wealth. He had never heard of my engagement to his brother. It was such a short time, and the secret had been kept well."

Iris opened her eyes.

"You married Mr. Tempest's brother?"

"Yes. I knew he loved me. He was the one person in the world I trusted, and it seemed to me—don't tremble so—it seemed to me I must forget Vere when I was his sister."

"And you never saw him?"

"Never once! He was in the army, and at the time of the rupture with me he exchanged into a foreign regiment. As time went on and Roger received firm refusals to all his entreaties to Vere to come home, he grew uneasy."

"Iris, here is where you will blame me; I know I blame myself. I could not tell my husband his brother would not come to England on a visit because he shrank from meeting me, and when I found Roger was taking up the notion Vere had believed himself the heir, and resented the coming of our children because they stood between him and wealth, it seemed such a satisfactory explanation I let him go on in his mistake."

"It was unkind, but how could you help it?"

"It was selfish, but I have been punished. My marriage was not unhappy. Roger idolised me and the children, and he was so good; he had all his brother's truth and constancy. He was not the love of my life, but yet I mourned him very really when four years ago he left me. He died abroad. We had lived in France for some months, and the end was sudden at the last; there was no time for him to alter his will even had he wished it."

"And you came home?"

Mrs. Nairn shook her head.

"No; Uncle Douglas was failing even then. I had no one very near to me in England. I preferred remaining where I was. The old lawyer who had managed my husband's affairs came over to explain things to me. Then I knew the evil I had done. I never dreamed I could work Vere any more harm until I listened to Mr. Danvers."

"Mr. Danvers! Does he live in Pump-court?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"He is my guardian. He came over to Italy to fetch me when papa died, and found me my situation at Miss Stone's. He has been very kind to me. He keeps all my father's papers, and told me once perhaps there would be a little money for me when I came of age, only I was not to count on it, because it was quite uncertain. I like Mr. Danvers, Mrs. Nairn. I think you might trust him."

"I do; but you will hear soon I have put it out of his power to help me. My husband's

will was dated after Vere's last refusal to apply for leave to come to England, and his name was not even mentioned in it. Everything poor Roger had bequeathed to me for my life. At my death one half was to go to Roger, our eldest boy, and the other half to be divided among the other children. If Roger died young the next brother was to be his heir. If all the children died before their majority, then I had power to dispose of the fortune by will, and invest the capital as I pleased; but so long as any of my four children lived, I was but a life tenant, and could not remove the money from the funds. Let me put it plainer, Miss Daryl. If I died to-morrow, Gertrude would be a ward of Chancery, and the owner of half a million of money, and Mr. Nairn would lose all interest in her fortune and have no longer a share in her guardianship, unless it was given him by the Lord Chancellor."

"But you are not going to die?"

"I sometimes think it would be better for her."

"Better for Gertie to lose her mother? Why, dear Mrs. Nairn, you must be dreaming?"

"You don't understand," said Helen, hoarsely. "No danger threatens Gertie when once I am gone. No one would wish to remove her from life to endow her Uncle Vere with a handsome fortune; but if she died to-morrow don't you see I am her heir. I can only endow Mr. Nairn now with the control of fifteen thousand a year, which he cannot anticipate or increase by speculation. Were I childless, I should be the nominal and he the actual possessor of five hundred thousand pounds!"

Iris turned to her with a bleached face.

"You cannot think—"

"I dare not think," replied the other. "I never have an easy moment when Gertie is out of my sight. I let her have neither food nor pleasure unshared by me, for I know if it is to our enemy's interest to snap the thread of her young life, it is even more important to him to prolong mine."

"This is terrible!"

"I said you would despise me."

"I don't despise you, dear. I pity you more than words can say; but oh, I hope, I trust you are mistaken!"

"You have not heard all."

"No. You have yet to tell me how you came to marry Mr. Nairn."

"I don't know."

Iris started.

"It is quite true," said Helen, simply. "Remember I did not know then how he had deceived me about Vere. I was helpless and lonely. Mr. Danvers was so much incensed at Vere being passed over in the will that he would have no intercourse with me, save on the most formal terms. My uncle was old and helpless. I had put an impassable barrier between myself and Vere. I was friendless!"

"Surely not?"

"Well, it seemed so. I tired of France. I wanted to come home. I could not live at the Grange, a young widow, with Mr. Nairn, an unmarried man, domesticated there. He suggested we should marry; I refused him twice. Then I heard (I know now he started the rumour himself) his visits to me were creating a scandal. I was bringing a shadow on the name that was my children's. I had not a shadow of regard for George Nairn, but I thought he was a clever, good, prudent man, who would be a kind father to the children, and so two years and a-half ago I married him."

"And was he kind to you—at first?"

"I cannot say he has ever been unkind to me. Of harsh words and brutal conduct I have no complaints. I found out the part he had played in breaking my engagement to Vere, and I despised him. I am not a very cautious woman, and I suppose I let him see it. Then I never tried to conceal that the children were all the world to me, and he was

nothing. We had one baby girl. She died, and the last link between us was broken."

"Were the children afraid of him?"

"They never 'took' to him, but none of them ever called him unkind. After baby went Roger began to droop. We had a doctor from York to meet our own attendant. They called the disease low fever, and said he would soon be well. In three months he was gone."

"Miss Daryl, the others followed. The doctor declared it was low fever. They were not strong children, and they drooped and died. I have read dozens of medical works, and I confess my boys' symptoms were those of low fever—but I have never felt easy since. I never said to Mr. Nairn in so many words what I feared, but I told him the moment Gertie ailed anything, even the merest trifle, I should go to London and stay with Mr. Danvers, so that she might have the best advice."

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing."

"You think he knew your motive?"

"I am sure of it; and whatever helped her brothers to their grave will not help Gertie. I have no shadow of proof against Mr. Nairn. He has nothing to gain from the boys' deaths, unless Gertie follows them. He was as kind and attentive as possible during their illness, but," she lowered her voice, "he could not stay in the room while they died. He would not pass its door while they lay dead, and though our way to church goes just by their little graves, never does he forget to take a long detour so as to avoid the spot."

"And you have told no one?"

"I told the vicar—an old man who had christened me and married me. He thought me insane. I asked the doctor from York if Gertie showed the slightest signs of her brother's complaint, and he said 'No.' If I kept her in the free, open country, breathing her native air, she might grow into a strong woman; but he warned me she was of a delicate brain, and any understudy might bring on disease."

"And this is why you stay here?"

"Here I can model my life as I will. I have a suite of rooms for myself and Gertrude, into which Mr. Nairn and Janet never come. The time he brought you to my boudoir was the first he has entered it for months. An old woman, who was my housekeeper in Roger's lifetime, has gladly come back as Gertrude's nurse. Between us surely we can watch. If I took the child away I could not prevent Mr. Nairn from accompanying us. No, she is safer here."

"And you see no one?"

"No one."

"It must be lonely."

"It is. I brood over my griefs till I feel well-nigh distracted. Miss Daryl, you may remember an old fairy tale in which his daughter being destined to die from pricking her finger with a spinning-wheel, a king banishes all spinning-wheels from his kingdom. I have striven to do the same for Gertie."

"I don't understand."

"Listen. Diseases of an infectious kind are carried in the clothes. I never let the gardeners pass beyond the white gate you noticed. I will have no children about the house. Old nurse or I always follow Gertie wherever she goes. We only let her walk in the park. She never goes into the grounds unless no gardeners are about. Except yourself she has seen no one from beyond the Grange for months. Surely my unflinching care must save her."

Iris felt dimly something was wrong. In trying to enact the part of Providence to her child Mrs. Nairn seemed defying Heaven.

"It would be better if you could trust God more," she whispered. "Surely He would take care of Gertie."

"She is all I have."

Silence, then the mother started up.

"You don't mean you think her ill?"

"She looks so delicate," answered Iris;



"and she has such a grave, sad face. Oh! Mrs. Nairn, she is like a flower that has never felt the sunshine!"

"She has me!"

"I should like to see her laugh and play with other children!"

"You don't understand. She is all I have. I must take care of Gertie."

It was throwing words away. Iris felt poor Mrs. Nairn had, indeed, good cause to be careful of her only child. She wondered if the precautions and preventatives with which her mother-love had hedged in the little girl would avail.

Iris herself had a strange recollection of an old saying, that no plant too much watered ever thrives, and she feared dimly so it might prove with Gertie. She had never been able to forget the old uncle's remark that first night, "Gertie is only fit for Heaven!"

She dared not repeat that to Mrs. Nairn any more than she would have ventured to remind her that in the old fairy tale she had quoted, the princess *did* find a spinning-wheel, although they had been banished from her father's kingdom.

### CHAPTER III.

Time passed on until Iris Daryl had been three months at Marton. She had improved in health. The fresh, country air, the easy life and luxuries which surrounded her had changed the thin, fragile-looking governess into a blooming girl; but for the deep sympathy she felt for Mrs. Nairn, Iris would have been completely happy.

But the mystery which hung over the Grange was deep as ever. Mr. and Mrs. Nairn rarely met. They never touched each other's hands in the most ordinary greeting. Helen made not the slightest attempt to hide the aversion with which she regarded him.

Between the two Iris often felt perplexed. In her sympathy for the sorrowing mother she felt a shrinking from the easy-going, prosperous master of Marton; but when she thought over the matter calmly she acknowledged she had no proof of anything against him.

He led an honourable, upright life—or seemed to. He was a good master, a faithful friend and caretaker to poor infirm Sir Douglas; and, in spite of his wife's marked disdain, he never failed in courtesy and consideration to her, and seemed really fond of Gertrude.

The peculiar retirement in which the family lived threw Iris more into his company than she desired. Helen Nairn, in her strange fear of all that concerned her child, declared Miss Daryl must in no wise offend Mr. Nairn lest she should be replaced by a less acceptable teacher.

"I can trust you!" the poor woman would whisper. "I am not jealous, even though Gertrude loves you. If once he suspects I like you he will send you away. Don't make him angry; listen when he tells you I am foolish and fanciful. Ride with him when he wishes it. If only he and Janet Thwaites think you on their side all will be well."

Poor Iris could not refuse a request so urged. She accompanied Mr. Nairn on some country rides, and even went with him to York on a day's shopping. He always treated her with a marked cordiality, and as the time wore on he made no attempt to hide from her his knowledge of his wife's suspicion.

"You have been with us three months," he said to her one day when he met her in the park. "You have seen me day after day. I ask you, do you think I seem the kind of man to conspire against innocent children to enrich myself? My wife thinks me a murderer. I dare say she has told you as much?"

Poor Iris felt in a terrible strait. "I think Mrs. Nairn's grief for her children has made her almost morbid on the matter."

He looked up attentively.

"And morbid feelings freely indulged in lead to madness. Miss Daryl, I often fear that

unprejudiced persons would call my wife insane."

"Oh, no!"

"Don't you know the first symptom of insanity is a dislike to those the patient has formerly loved. Look at Helen's life. When I married her she was a most brilliant creature; she delighted in music and books, she held her own in society like a queen. Now she never opens the piano or takes up a book, while her persistent denials of herself to visitors have so offended our neighbours that from month's end to month's end not a creature comes near us."

"If you spoke to her," hazarded Iris, "would it not be better?"

He shook his head.

"I know of no remedy save one."

"And that is?"

He hesitated.

"You will not tell her? Remember, Miss Daryl, to be successful the remedy must be sudden and unexpected."

"You may rely on my not doing anything which could be against Mrs. Nairn's recovery."

He looked at her sharply.

"The one chance of saving her intellect is to separate her from her child!"

"It would kill her!"

He shook his head.

"It would destroy for ever her morbid fancies. Once let her see that Gertie ails nothing, and can be perfectly well and happy without the terrible anxiety she feels for her, and Helen would be herself again."

"If that is your remedy I am sure it can not answer. Mrs. Nairn would never consent."

"But how if her consent were not asked?"

"You would not be so cruel."

"Miss Daryl, try to look at the matter from my side. I am not an old man."

"I never thought you were!"

"I am barely forty. There may be thirty years of life left me! Must I spend them all like this—lifeless, homeless, yet bound by bonds I dare not break? Miss Daryl, and his voice had a sudden passion in it, "I am the most miserable of men. Heaven knows I meant to be a good husband to my poor Helen. I loved her once. Is it my fault that she has destroyed that love, and that I regret the tie between us as thoroughly as she does?"

"Could you not be separated?" asked Iris. "Surely, if you feel like this, you would be happier apart?"

"I shall never be happy again!" returned George Nairn, mournfully. "Two years and a half ago I made a great mistake—I married a woman who did not love me."

"But if you were parted?" urged Iris. "Surely you would forget?"

"If we were parted, it would not give me back my freedom!—would not suffer me to offer my hand where my heart has strayed. Miss Daryl, Iris, forgive me!"

It was an awful moment to Iris Daryl. Pure and innocent as she was she could not misunderstand his meaning. He was actually daring to tell her, that he, a married man, loved her. The shame and misery of it seemed more than she could bear. She was Helen Nairn's friend, and at her request she had given more of her society to Mr. Nairn than she cared to—and this was the end. With one indignant bound she had left his side, and sped away as fast as her feet would carry her.

George Nairn watched her until she was out of sight.

"Will she carry the news to Helen, I wonder?" he asked himself. "Hardly; my last disclosure will effectually make her hold her tongue. If she insinuates to my wife I wish to part her from the child it will only be what Helen has suspected for months. Well, I was born to be a rich man, and I can't help what steps I have to take to accomplish my destiny."

Iris hardly noticed where she was going.

She did not know in her agitation that she had walked miles, and had passed unperceived beyond the boundaries of the Marton property, and was wandering in a wood which belonged to Mrs. Melville, a near neighbour of the Nairns, whose very name she had never heard.

Worn out with trouble and excitement she flung herself on to the fallen branch of a tree; and sitting there, with her head buried in her hands, she sobbed as though her very heart was breaking.

What could she do? She longed to run away at once, and never set foot in the Grange again; but then she was only a friendless little orphan. She had no home to run to, no relations to welcome her; besides, Gertie and her mother, how could she bear to leave them? Mr. Nairn's words that morning had made her as inclined to suspect him of any evil as his poor wife herself. Evidently he meant, at any cost, to separate the child from her mother, and they would need poor Iris more than ever.

"What is the matter?"

Iris started to her feet, and saw a gentleman bending over her with a kind, concerned face. He might have been the same age as George Nairn, but his was a very different countenance; honour, truth, and compassion were stamped upon his features.

"My poor child!" he said, gravely, "what is the matter? Can I not help you?"

"I am not a child!" said Iris, a little indignant even then at the mistake, and guessing that from her plain white dress and untrimmed straw hat he had taken her for some little villager.

She started to her feet; then, for the first time, he saw her face, and, to her surprise, his own grew very pale.

"Helen!" he exclaimed, hastily. "But no, it is impossible!"

Iris caught at the words.

"Did you take me for Mrs. Nairn? Are you a friend of hers?" she cried, impulsively.

"I was struck by your resemblance to her! I have not seen her for many years."

"But you are a friend of hers?"

"I would do a great deal to help her, for Roger Tempest's sake; but—"

Iris forgot she had never seen him before, and that she had felt angry with him for thinking her a child. She cried eagerly,—

"If you are a friend of hers, you will tell me what to do. You will help me?"

He smiled.

"I feared I had offended you rather seriously by offering you my aid."

"I was foolish!"

"Nay," he said, gently, "I startled you. But when I came upon you first, I thought I had found some child in trouble."

"I am in great trouble!"

"And you will let me help you? We will sit down comfortably on this old tree, and you shall tell me all about it. But, first, can you explain your bewildering likeness to Mrs. Nairn?"

Iris shook her head.

"She notices it herself, so I suppose I must be like her. But I am no relation. I never even heard of her till I came to be Gertie's governess three months ago."

"Gertie's governess! And what is the heiress like?"

"She is the sweetest child you ever saw; but—"

"But what? And may I not know your name?"

"I am Iris Daryl. I cannot explain to you about Gertie. She is not ill. Old Sir Douglas always says she is only fit for Heaven, and I—I have just the same feeling!"

"And you were crying over it?"

"No; not over that."

"What then? Miss Daryl, no good ever yet came of a half-confidence. If I am to help you I must know all."

"But Mr. Nairn!" Iris shivered. "I think he would kill me if you told him!"

"Be easy. George Nairn and I are not on

speaking terms. My hostess, Mrs. Melville, has a great antipathy to him."

Poor Iris told her story. She kept back nothing save the fact of Mr. Nairn's admiration for herself. From the surprise of the porter on her arrival at Marton, to George Nairn's declaration his wife's reason was failing, she poured out her story.

"You will help her?" pleaded Iris. "I think it would kill her if Gertie were taken from her!"

He sighed.

"I remember her the queen of Marton Grange, the favourite of all the county side. If any future ever looked fair it was hers; and she has come to this!"

"But you will save her?"

"Miss Daryl, of all people in the world I am the one least able to interfere. All that I can do must be by stealth. If we are to do any good, you must never mention this meeting to a creature at the Grange."

"I will not! oh, I will not! But what do you think? If you know how my brain aches with trying to find out what to believe!"

"Believe anything you like of George Nairn, and, however black you imagine him, you will not wrong him. He is a fiend! I cannot tell you half the wickedness he has wrought, and yet so cleverly that he is able to pose as a respectable man. Money is his god! Have no fear that he will do anything to shorten his wife's life, since only through her could he hope to inherit the Marton property, which brings in ten thousand a-year."

"But Gertie—and the little boys?"

The stranger hesitated.

"I once knew Mrs. Nairn well. I don't think she is the woman to conceive such an idea without grounds. I should say that if he did not actually contrive the death of the children he hastened it."

"Mrs. Nairn says the Vicar thought her suspicions absurd."

"Dear old man; he is so guileless himself it would be easy to deceive him. Besides, Nairn leads a model life here, and is rather pitied than otherwise in the neighbourhood."

"Pitied? He?"

"Mrs. Nairn's conduct has made her most unpopular. Indeed, she has acted in such an eccentric manner that the rumour of her insanity—carefully spread no doubt by her husband—is steadily gaining ground."

Iris started.

"You don't believe it?"

"I fear I was near doing so till I met you. Of course, I can see the man's drift now. With Helen in an asylum, Mr. Nairn would be the real owner of the Marton property, and of Vere Tempest if he could get rid of the child!"

Iris clasped her hands in entreaty.

"But you will save her?"

"Personally, I am powerless; but this much I can do. An old lawyer, a friend of mine, is in some sense Gertrude's trustee. I can persuade him to come down here and see Mrs. Nairn. If he invited her and her child on a visit, I don't see her husband could prevent their going; and, once away, it would be easy for her to refuse to return."

"And shall I tell her?"

"That you met me? Certainly not."

"No, shall I tell her what Mr. Nairn contemplates? It seems cruel to hide it."

"It would be cruelty to reveal it, Miss Daryl. All you can do for Mrs. Nairn is to keep as much with her as possible, and if that wretch should attempt to shut her up in an asylum, find out the address and send it to Mrs. Melville. I need not warn you if her mother is removed from the Grange, you must watch over Gertie by night and by day."

"It seems so terrible that anyone should be so wicked just for money!"

"There are few things people won't do for money. When you are a woman you will know that to be rich is your destiny. It doesn't matter how many hearts you break in reaching wealth."

Iris shivered.

"Please don't talk like that!"

"Why not?"

"It sounds as though you believed in nothing," she said, sadly.

"And I have cause." Then, his voice changing, "Believe me, Miss Daryl, I may trust very few people, but I have faith in you. For your sake I will do what I can to serve the unhappy lady of the Grange."

"Did she ever offend you?" asked Iris.

"You seem to dislike her."

"Do I?"

"You would not if you saw her now. She seems just like one whose very heart is broken."

"Poor Helen!" returned the stranger, slowly, "and I remember her the merriest girl in Yorkshire. Miss Daryl, if I am to catch the next train to Yorkshire I must leave you now. Good-bye!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

Iris thought that day the longest she had ever spent. It was so hard to sit with Mrs. Nairn and say nothing of all that had happened. They spent the afternoon quite quietly with the child.

Helen fancied Gertie was unusually tired and languid; she seemed not to care to play, but sat with her golden head resting lovingly on Miss Daryl's shoulder.

"If she is not better to-morrow I shall send for the doctor," declared Mrs. Nairn, "and her cough is so troublesome. Gertie, you must take a dose of your cough mixture before you go to bed."

The child sighed as though she did not like the prospect, and Iris hoped Mrs. Nairn would forget it; for, to her mind, poor Gertie was quite a martyr to the various remedies kept for her use by her careful mother.

As it happened, Mrs. Nairn did forget, and Gertie was allowed to go to bed without any mention of the cough medicine; but the mother, who was indeed far more in need of remedies than the child, poured out a table-spoonful for herself, and drank it before retiring.

"I don't want to get really ill," she said, simply. "It would give him an excuse for parting us. Miss Daryl, did you know he had gone to London?"

"I had no idea of it."

"Nurse saw him starting. He told her he should be away three or four days. Iris, I wonder if it is wicked of me, but when he is away I feel so safe?"

Iris herself had very mingled feelings about Mr. Nairn's absence. It was delightful to think she need not see him for some days. But what if he had gone to London to carry out his cruel scheme, and brought back some unscrupulous doctors who would declare poor Helen of unsound mind?

If only Mr. Danvers could come while he was away, how easily Mrs. Nairn's deliverance could be effected!

Iris thought over it a great deal, and at last she determined on her own responsibility to telegraph to Mr. Danvers.

She had a vague idea that telegrams, though they passed through many hands, were yet kept secret. Besides, Mr. Danvers was her guardian. If her message ever got into Mr. Nairn's hands she could urge this fact, and he could hardly prove she had not wanted to see the lawyer on her own affairs.

There was a post-office in Marton village, only one mile from the Grange, and it opened for telegraph business at eight o'clock. Breakfast time was half-an-hour later, so that it would be quite possible for her to do her errand and be back without Mrs. Nairn suspecting she had been further than her usual morning stroll in the park. It could do no harm, and it might be of great use.

Iris was lavish in her expenditure that morning. It was in the days of twenty words for a shilling; but she far exceeded that limit.

This was her summons:

"Can you make your proposed visit to me to-day? It is most urgent that you should do so, as, if you do, all can be easily arranged. He is away."

She walked home blithely. She seemed to tread on air. This was Tuesday, and Mr. Nairn was not expected till Friday. Surely, if Mr. Danvers obeyed her summons Helen and her child would be safe from all pursuit before he returned?

She walked up the avenue singing "Coming thro' the rye." For years after she could not hear that song without a strange pain, so vividly did it recall the events of that morning.

Janet Thwaites met her on the verandah.

"I should think you'd like your breakfast alone this morning, Miss Daryl?" she said, not uncivilly. "Mrs. Nairn has not even begun to get up yet."

"Where is Gertie?"

"With her mother, I suppose. Will you wait, Miss Daryl, or have your breakfast?"

"I think I'll have it, please, Janet. I feel hungry."

But she had not sat down to it when the nurse and Gertie appeared—Gertie wan and heavy, looking more as though she had come to the close of a long day than as though the day had hardly begun.

"Mother's sleeping still," she said, clinging lovingly to Iris. "And I'm so tired. My cough kept me awake a lot."

"She's just taken a dose of the mixture," said nurse, in an approving tone. "The mistress had left it on the table. She do sleep soundly, Miss Daryl. She never even stirred when I went in to dress Miss Gertrude."

Breakfast was begun, but Gertie could hardly touch anything, she seemed overcome with sleep; and at last Iris made her lie down on the sofa, and very soon she fell asleep.

The young governess felt troubled at the child's pale, heavy look, and the moment nurse had removed the breakfast things she asked to see Mrs. Nairn.

"I am sure she would rather we disturbed her than that Gertie suffered. I want to know if I had better send for the doctor."

"I'd send, miss, if I were you," said the old woman, sagaciously. "The mistress'll be thankful to you; it's so little sleep she gets it seems a shame to disturb her."

Iris yielded. A groom was dispatched, and, oddly enough, he met the doctor just by the lodge gates.

Dr. Garnies was a young physician, and he had concurred implicitly in his brother practitioner's verdict of the three little boys. He could not set up his opinion in opposition to that of the great man from York, but he had felt just enough uneasy as to warn Mrs. Nairn always to send for him directly if Gertie ailed anything.

"These low, feverish attacks are easily cured if taken in time," he told her. "It is only the delay that makes them dangerous."

"I have done my best," was his self-consolation, after he had given this advice. "Even if Nairn is not straightforward he would not dare attempt anything rapid; and if once I detect the symptoms that troubled me last time Gertrude shall go to London if I kidnap her myself."

So Dr. Garnies had just sufficient distrust of Mr. Nairn as to make him very tender and patient with poor Helen. More than once she had sent for him because Gertrude "seemed ill," when he knew the child ailed nothing; but he never failed to obey her call rapidly just because he always had an uneasy sort of feeling trouble might come.

He and Iris had met more than once, so that she had no embarrassment in receiving him.

"It is my fault, doctor," she explained, "if we have given you a needless journey. Mrs. Nairn is not up yet, and Gertie looks so ill."

"Is she in bed?"

"No; she says her cough kept her awake all night. She took some of the mixture you sent



as soon as she was up, and now she has fallen asleep."

Another moment, and the doctor was standing over the child. Iris felt, by the sudden change in his face, that something very serious was wrong.

"What have you been giving this child?" he demanded of nurse.

"Nothing, sir," said nurse, in an aggrieved tone. "She took one dose of your mixture when she got up, and she had nothing else save a bit of breakfast!"

"She has been poisoned. Heaven help her poor mother!"

"Can't you save her?" pleaded Iris. "Oh, sir, do try for her mother's sake!"

"She is dead!" he said quietly. "She must have been dead some moments when I came in. Nurse, what has caused it?"

"Surely I can't tell you, sir. She was as well as possible, except for her cough, when she went to bed. She sleeps in her mother's room, and my room opens from it. The two outer doors were locked all night; no one could have come in."

"And Mrs. Nairn is in bed. Surely that is very unusual?"

"It is, sir. My mistress has so little sleep I couldn't bear to rouse her. Her cough has been troublesome too. She took a dose of that very mixture when she went to bed."

Dr. Garnies' face changed.

"I must see her!"

They left the dead child with the old nurse, Iris pausing to kiss the sweet, calm face before she followed Dr. Garnies to Mrs. Nairn's room.

"How shall we tell her?" she whispered.

"Oh, doctor, it will kill her!"

But the doctor had reached the bedside, and drawing away the curtain, stood gazing on the quiet features.

"We need not tell her," he answered. "Miss Daryl, Heaven has been very merciful to her. She is with her child!"

It was even so. The bottle of cough mixture must have been abstracted from Mrs. Nairn's medicine chest, and sufficient poison added as to make a single dose fatal. The hand which did the cruel deed belonged to Janet Thwaites or George Nairn; it was never clearly proved which. No doubt it never occurred to them that Mrs. Nairn would take some of the medicine as well as her child.

There was an inquest, and the verdict recorded was "death from misadventure." The bottle discovered on Mrs. Nairn's table, though precisely similar to the one holding the cough mixture, bore no label, and the theory suggested by the lawyer, who "watched the case" for George Nairn, was, that in a fit of nervous abstraction the poor mother had taken the wrong bottle in mistake.

No one in their heart believed this; but it could not bring back Helen and her little girl to life—to prove her husband was a murderer. It would benefit no one to take vengeance on the wretched man, so he and his accomplice escaped scot free; but neither Janet Thwaites nor her sometime master ever showed their face in Yorkshire again.

Mr. Danvers obeyed the summons poor Iris had sent before she knew of the tragedy that was to come. His self-reproach for his neglect of his old friend's widow was very keen.

"You see, my dear," he told Iris, "I loved Vere Tempest as my own son, and I was indignant at his sister-in-law's being wretched at his expense. Well, it all comes back to him now. Mrs. Nairn died some hours before her child, and he is poor Gertie's next-of-kin."

"I suppose he will come to England now?"

Mr. Danvers opened his eyes.

"He's been in England for months. Why you saw him yourself yesterday."

A burning blush dyed her cheek.

"Was that Mr. Tempest?"

"To be sure. Well, he's no landed property, but he comes in for half a million of money. A very pretty fortune!"

"Mr. Danvers, shall I ask Miss Stone to take me back, or will you find me another situation?"

"I don't think you'll need one."

"Why not?"

"Look here, Iris, you come home with me for a week. I can't tell you anything positively until I have had an interview with that scoundrel Nairn."

This puzzled Iris very much, but perhaps she was almost astounded when Mr. Danvers told her her own story.

"Did you never wonder at your likeness to poor Mrs. Nairn?" he asked her, when the inquest on Helen and her child was over, and the papers had had their last say about the Marton tragedy.

"Often."

"You met old Sir Douglas? Did he ever speak to you?"

"He said he had seen me before. What will become of him now, Mr. Danvers? He can't live at the Grange all alone."

"He is dead, child. Died quite naturally of old age. His faculties had been impaired for many years, but I think he was well cared for. Nairn did his duty to him if to no one else."

"And Marton Grange is deserted? Do you know, in spite of all the troubles there, I loved the place."

"I am delighted to hear it," said the lawyer, rubbing his hands, "because you'll probably have to live there."

"To live there! Me!"

"Well, your mother was Sir Douglas's only child, and though he threatened to disinherit her when she married your father, he always put off making his will. He died intestate, and you are lady of Marton Grange?"

"I rather fancy," he went on gravely, "George Nairn knew you were the rightful heiress, and that is why he preferred you to all other applicants to the post of Gertie's governess."

"But—"

"In my opinion, Iris, you have escaped a great danger. He was not a man to stick at trifles. You were a nearer heir than his wife to Marton. I believe if you had shown the least disposition to marry, you would have found yourself prevented. He meant either to keep you under his own eye a helpless girl, easily crushed if dangerous, or else to kindly help you out of the world as he did those poor children."

"Then I was Mrs. Nairn's cousin?"

"She and your mother were first cousins. Well, young lady, you see your situation is found for you—that of mistress of Marton Grange."

Iris sighed.

"I don't like it a bit."

"Very ungrateful of you. Why not?"

"It will be so lonely."

"You'll marry?"

Iris shook her head. "Never."

Once more in the September sunshine Vere Tempest and Iris Daryl stand together in the woods round Marton. In manly, earnest tones he tells her how he has learned to love her, if not with the boyish passion he felt for the ill-fated Helen, yet with a steady, constant love which will endure for life.

"It is a grave gap, I know," he said, fondly, "between nineteen and thirty-six; but, my darling, cannot love bridge it over? Iris, won't you give yourself to me to be the sunshine of my life?"

We know not how she answered, but when the spring flowers bloomed for the second time on Helen's grave there was a simple wedding in Marton church; and now Vere Tempest has a wife whom he loves as truly as ever he loved his boyhood's choice, and whose beauty is the pride of all that country side.

Mr. Danvers cites the Tempests as the happiest couple he knows, and often declares Vere ought to be peculiarly grateful to the advertisement which lured Iris to Yorkshire in the time of THE MYSTERY OF MARTON GRANGE.

[THE END.]

A SINGULAR LEGACY has recently been left to the town of Dresden by Jean de Block, a Court Councillor. It consists of a collection of boots formerly belonging to Emperors, Kings, Queens, and celebrated characters who have lived in recent times. The most noteworthy are a pair of white satin shoes, embroidered in gold, worn by Napoleon I. on the day of his coronation, together with a pair of boots which he wore at the Battle of Dresden on 27th April, 1813; leather boots belonging to Murat; a pair of high-heeled shoes of Marie-Thérèse; and the boots of the philosopher Kant.

POLITE LETTER-WRITING. — Writing from the Gold Coast, a correspondent says, "Perhaps, next to a negro funeral, the most comical thing is a negro letter. I have known a cook to ask a favour of his master in a letter beginning, 'Dear and lovely master.' Here is a letter from a princess, from whom I rented part of a house while in Africa: 'Be no objection to allow me most respectfully for the high opinion there taken, to inform you just to take your time to shut gently your doors instead of dashing them boldly, for I am afraid perhaps will give crackings to the wall by so doing.' The next speaks for itself. 'Sir, with humility beg most respectfully to apply from your hands the post clerkship in your office, and trust this my humble application will meet your kind approval, and to hold out to me in the prospect of said situation. I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient servant, E. Q. No doubt for any offer on wages.'"

FAST SPECIAL TRAINS. — A correspondent of the Times, writing on the subject of the daily race between the two fast trains to the north, says: "There is one point of which I have seen no notice taken—the increased wear and tear, mentally and bodily, of the driver and stoker, on these special trains. A friend of one of the drivers told me that he saw a marked effect on his apparent health. The driver told him his anxiety was greatly increased. On one occasion his stoker, who had gone along the engine to oil the valve, became paralyzed with fear so that he could not move forwards or backwards. The driver had to leave his place and follow his stoker and seize his hand, and so they regained the standing-place. The distances run are so great and the pace so rapid that any oiling, etc., is done with increased risk. The force of the wind is so great that when the stoker creeps along the footplate alongside of the engine he has to hold on by the rail like grim death, and has been carried off his feet."

THE GLASS OF FASHION. — The traditional vanity of woman, says an American contemporary, is offset by the Gotham beau, who is posing conspicuously as a model for the tailor, the hatter, the shoemaker and glover, under the comprehensive title of "The American Glass of Fashion and the Mould of Form." The gentleman has evidently lavished great care and thought on the varied subject, and his summer wardrobe would put to the blush the *trousseau* of a wealthy belle. He has a complete outfit for each and every occasion; he changes his morning for his noon suit; that again for an afternoon costume—a little further on, a dinner suit is donned, to be displaced still later by evening or full dress. Intervening hours he will wear a riding, tennis, bathing, or boating suit. And each change is complete, down to the veriest detail. A prevailing masculine "craze" is for each man of fashion to wear a distinctive flower. This is a notion from "across seas." The Emperor Friedrich wore continually, in his button-hole, a modest cluster of violets, just as his father was always decorated with the corn-flower. A well-known society man of to-day is never seen without a single ivy leaf on the lapel of his coat, and another wears, invariably, a white rose, so small as to be barely noticeable. By autumn it is prophesied that military fashions for men will be the rage. This is also a "fad" borrowed from our foreign cousins.

## FACETIÆ.

"I'm quite immersed in my business," said the teacher of swimming.

WHAT is that which is in visible, yet never out of sight? The letter "i."

THE sweetest of sweet girls who will wait for you is worth her wait in gold.

THE man who hates the cornet player has been tutored (tootced) in the school of suffering.

WE frequently hear of a *flight* of steps, but we have never yet been able to discover where they *fly* to.

A CRUSTRY old bachelor says he thinks it is woman, and not her wrongs, that ought to be redressed.

WHAT moral lesson does a weather-cock on a church steeple continually inculcate? 'Tis *come to a spire*.

WE sometimes say, "Out of sight, out of mind," but we do not necessarily imply that a blind man is insane.

A FAT man is more likely to fame and feet with impatience than a lean one. He thinks it may reduce his wait.

IT is all very well to have a clock on the stairs; but it is not at all desirable to have it run down and strike one.

"ONLY a match-box," remarked Fogg, at the theatre the other night, referring to the seats where the young lovers sat.

A BOILER which exploded suddenly a few days ago was said to be as thin as paper. It was attached to a stationary engine, of course.

THERE is one blessing that cold weather brings—it makes people generous. In cold weather people all put their hands in their pockets.

"I SAW a ship at sea the other day," said Flittery, "that wasn't on the water." "Nonsense! That's absurd!" "Absurd?—not a bit of it. She was on fire."

"THAT'S it!" exclaimed Mrs. Bascom at the concert, as the singers came out again in response to an encore. "Make 'em do it over again until they get the thing right."

HUSBAND: "I think we had better give up our pew in the church for awhile, my love." WIFE: "Why?" HUSBAND: "I am going in the coal business, and I hate hypocrisy."

HE LIKED THE RESULT.—Seedy party (to bar tender): "Whisky, please." Bar tender: "What kind, friend?" Seedy party: "Gimme the same as the feller had wots lyin' under the billiard-table."

DOCTOR, I have come to see you about my little boy." "What ails him?" "One leg is shorter than the other, and he limps. Now, what would you do in such a case?" "I think I should limp, too."

AN IRRESISTIBLE APPEAL.—Scene: A lonely spot on a dark night: "Would the gentleman be so kind as to assist a poor man?" "Besides this loaded revolver I have nothing in the wide world to call my own!"

A MAN CLOTHED IN FINE RAIMENT.—"How did you manage to capture such a handsome wife, Mr. Tucker, when you are such a homely man?" "Oh, my good clothes did it; I just put on my best bib and tuck her."

A CHRISTIAN TO REVIVE A MUMMY.—"Gracious, how well it is preserved," said one travelling man to another, as they gazed at a mummy in a museum. "It looks as if it might wake up and speak, if you could only arouse it with some familiar words." "So it does. Suppose you try it with that story you just told me."

ANOTHER PENSION FRIEND.—Pension Agent: "So you lost your voice during the war?" Applicant: "Yes, sir." Pension Agent: "Was it through general exposure or the result of an accident?" Applicant: "Gin'ral exposure. After I'd paid for my substitoot, me an' maw used ter sit on the porch an' sing, 'Just Before the Battle, Mother.'"

AFRAID OF THE TRUNCHEON.—Magistrate: "If you were sober when arrested, why didn't you remonstrate with the officer?" Prisoner: "Please, your worship, I hadn't enough money with me to pay a fine and a surgeon's bill too."

JOHNNY, it would be a good thing for you to remember in life that we never get anything in this world if we don't ask for it." "Yes, we do, pa," answered Johnny, promptly; "I got a licking in school to-day, and you can bet I didn't ask for it."

"WHAT a sad fate that flirt has come to!" exclaimed Doctor Essem, as he laid down his paper. "Why, what has happened to her?" eagerly asked Mrs. E. "She has married the fellow who was fool enough to flirt with her," answered the doctor.

"AN, me!" sighed Mrs. Spriggins, "I knew this drinkin' would bring dissolution on to old Mr. Jenks. He's been committed as a hopeless invertebrate. That ought to be a warnin' to these debauchees at the shrine of Bacchus!"

"AH, Clara," said a young surgeon (after hospital hours), as he sank upon his knees, "would that I could gain possession of your heart!" "You can, Mr. Sawbones," replied Clara, promptly but blushing; "and without giving me ether, either."

WOULDN'T MIND THE BABY.—Wife: "Shall we go to the picnic to-day, dear?" Husband: "Just as you say, love." Wife: "Well, if we go we must take the baby." Husband: "Oh, by the way, there's all that wood to cut and split. I think I'll stay at home."

THE FIRST FRIEND.—"Who goes there?" said an Irish sentry of the British legion at St. Sebastiao. "A friend," was the prompt reply. "Then stand where you are," cried Pat, "for, by the powers, you're the first I've met with in this murderin' country."

KEPT IN THE ORIGINAL PACKAGE.—"I do think," said Amanda, who adores profundity, "that Mr. Gresham is full of ideas and information, don't you?" "I think he must be," replied George; "he's had forty years in which to accumulate them, and as never yet let one of them out."

HE KNEW THE BEST PLACE.—Minister (to Bertie): "I hope, Bertie, you don't go on the lake fishing with your father on Sunday?" Bertie: "No, sir." Minister: "I am glad to hear you say that, my boy." Bertie: "No, the best fishing is down at Burke's Creek. That's where I go."

THOROUGHLY SURDEED.—Lawyer: "Your wife, Mr. Henpeck, made no provision for you when she died?" Mr. Henpeck (sadly): "None whatever." Lawyer: "Are you going to try to break her will?" Mr. Henpeck (alarmed): "Certainly not. I got enough trying to do that while she was alive."

AN old toper was ill in the hospital with fever. "Will you give me something to drink?" he asked, faintly, of the nurse. "Certainly, sir," said the nurse, offering him a glass of water. He put up his hand feebly. "Give it to me in a teaspoon, please," he whispered, humbly, "till I get used to it."

A SUCCESSFUL WOMAN.—A youthful artist declares that a newly-betrothed lover commissioned him to paint a certain secluded nook in the rocks on the shore, because there he had declared his passion. The picture was painted, but before it was done the lover said to the artist: "Of course I will see you through on that picture, but my engagement is off, and, of course, it would be painfully suggestive to me. If you can sell it to somebody else I will take another picture, and be extremely obliged besides." The painter assented to the arrangement, but within a week his patron again presented himself. "It is all right," he announced, joyfully. "I'll take that picture." "Am I to congratulate you on the renewal of your engagement?" the artist asked. The other seemed a little confused, but quickly recovered his self-possession, and grinned, as he said: "Well, not exactly. It was the same place, but the girl was different."

"THIS is about the slimmest dinner I ever sat down to," he said, as he surveyed the table; "but I s'pose I ought to make certain allowances." "Yes, John," replied his wife. "If you would make certain allowances you would have no occasion to find fault with your food."

A PLEASING SENSATION.—"Dear me!" exclaimed Stiggins, "that new surgeon gave Squantum's boy a new lip from the child's own cheek. What a painful operation it must have been!" "I've had a pair of lips taken from my cheek more than once," replied Mrs. Stiggins, "and it wasn't a painful operation at all."

A HINT TO AN EARLY BIRD.—The rooster would be a much more popular bird if he could only be induced to feel that there is no real, vital necessity for his reporting his whereabouts between midnight and 3 A.M. We know that he is at home, in the bosom of his family. So are we, but we don't get up in the night to brag about it.

A RANK CIGAR.—They were sitting on the porch, and it was growing late. "Would you mind if I lighted a cigar, Miss Clara?" he asked. "Certainly not, Mr. Simpson," she replied. And presently the old man, who was getting desperate, spoke from an open window above. "Daughter," he said, "I left my fishing boots near the kitchen fireplace, and you had better see to 'em. I can smell something burning."

CANNOT FORGET HIS BUSINESS.—Miss Gushington: "What a magnificent sunset, Mr. Tapeline! And aren't the mountains just grand? Don't talk to me about continental scenery. Tell me, where can anything equal to this be found?" Mr. Tapeline (a gifted sales gentleman, who has been listening to this sort of thing for nearly an hour, and has become absent-minded): "Bargain counter, first floor, near the entrance."

GETTING HIS MONEY'S WORTH.—Mr. Shentpershent (at hotel table, a summer resort): "Mein gracious! Isaac, you little fool, vat for you ask for bret?" Little Isaac: "I vant bret mit my meat, fadder." Mr. Shentpershent: "Shuss hear dat! He vants bret ven bret sells for only fourpence a loaf, an' he can't eat a kavater off a loaf, an' I pay a sovereign a day at dis hotel. Here, Isaac, eat dis bottle off olives. Day cost five shillings a bottle."

A CRUSHED SUITOR.—"My young friend," said old Mr. Surplus to young Mr. Giddiboy, "do you not think that you were rash to ask my daughter to marry you when you are not able to support her?" "Well," said the young man, craftily, "perhaps I was. I admit my fault, and throw myself on your generosity, sir." "That's right," declared the old gentleman. "You shall not lose by it, I assure you. There, sir, is a penny to pay your tram fare home. No thanks, if you please. Good-day, Mr. Giddiboy."

THE CUTEST WAY OF DUNNING.—Two teachers of languages were discussing matters and things relative to their profession. "Do your pupils pay up regularly on the first of each month?" asked one of them. "No, they do not," was the reply. "I often have to wait for weeks and weeks before I get my pay, and sometimes I don't get it at all. You can't well dun the parents for the money." "Why don't you do as I do? I always get my money regularly." "How do you manage it?" "It is very simple. For instance, I am teaching a boy French, and on the first day of the month his folks don't pay the money for the lesson. In that event I give the boy the following sentence to translate and write out at home: I have no money. The month is up. Hast thou got any money? Have not thy parents got money? I need money, very much. Why hast thou not brought the money this morning. Did thy father not give thee any money? Has he no money in the purse of his uncle's great aunt? That fetches them. Next morning, you bet, that boy brings the money."



## SOCIETY.

The preparations at Windsor Castle for the reception of the Queen's Jubilee gifts, which have been on view at the Glasgow Exhibition since last May are nearly completed. They are to be deposited in the Vestibule—an apartment which is in the vicinity of the Grand Staircase, and is adorned with a statue of Her Majesty. This apartment has been closed during the alterations, and visitors to the Castle, instead of traversing it as heretofore, pass round through the Rubens and Ante-throne Rooms.

There was a little diversion for the Princess of Wales and the young people, the other day, when the Earl of Eife gave his annual torchlight gathering, and invited the Comte de Paris and a few select guests to meet the Princesses and young Albert Victor. There was a dinner first, then the torchlight procession, followed by dancing in the Tennis Court; and the clansmen—in all the glories of kilt and phibbeg—performed sundry reels to the inspiring skirling and groaning of the pipes, while the glare of the resin torches gave a weird aspect to the scene, and the quantity of whiskey consumed was quite in accordance with the barbaric antics.

It has been several times announced in the papers the Empress Frederick and her three daughters are coming to England, but still they come not; and now we have the intimation that may be expected to arrive in November for a three weeks' trip to be divided between a stay with the Queen at Windsor, and the Prince of Wales at Sandringham.

The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, before settling down for the winter at Malta, are going for a few days to Athens, to be present at the festivities to be given there on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the King's accession to the Throne.

There was an affectionate family meeting at Malta, when the Duchess of Edinburgh and her younger children arrived from Naples on board the *Surprise*, an hour before the English fleet came into harbour, bringing the Duke and Prince George of Wales. It is said, however, that Her Imperial Highness hurried away from Italy quite as much in order to avoid being at Rome while the "Kaiser show" was going forward, as because she was so impatient to greet her husband and nephew.

The Princess Louise is going on a long visit to her husband's relations at Inverary.

So far, the trip of the Czar and Czarina, in the southern provinces of Russia, has gone off remarkably well. On the Sunday they visited Batoum, where crowds of Circassian and other peasants, clad in gay national dresses, assembled to witness their Majesties' arrival at the parish church, and gave them a hearty welcome. After attending Divine service, the Sovereign and his Consort went in state to lay the foundation stone of a new Orthodox cathedral, and then went forward on their journey to Tiflis. A halt of a day or two was made at Borsum, to visit the Grand Duke Michael Nicholajevitch at his palace there. Here their Majesties received news of the young Grand Duke George's progress, about whose condition his father continues to feel great anxiety.

The Empress of Austria's unconcealed dislike for Vienna has long been a source of discontent; and now it seems more than probable that her intention to spend Christmas at Bournemouth will bring matters to a crisis. The Princess Metternich and the other *grandes dames* certainly do their best to keep up the reputation of Vienna as being the most chic capital in Europe, but there is a strong feeling that the Empress ought to be made to do her part. As the Viennese all declare the Emperor ought to have married her elder sister, the Princess Thurn and Taxis, to whom indeed he was at one time betrothed in an informal manner.

## STATISTICS.

MANY people are under the impression that imprisonment for debt in England has long been abolished; but this belief is certainly not borne out by the facts and figures cited by Judge Chalmers in an article on this subject in the *Fortnightly Review*. Last year nearly 49,000 warrants of committal for non-payment of debts were granted by the county courts alone; and Mr. Chalmers states that during the last three years he has himself, as judge at Birmingham, had to deal with more than 10,000 applications to commit judgment debtors to prison.

TEN thousand human beings start together on the journey of life. After ten years one-third have disappeared. At the middle points of the common measure of life but half are still upon the road. Faster and faster, as the ranks grow thinner, they that remain till now become weary, and lie down to rise no more. At seventy a band of some 400 yet struggle on. At ninety these have been reduced to a handful of thirty trembling patriarchs. Year after year they fall in diminishing numbers. One finger, perhaps, a lonely marvel, till the century is over. We look again, and the journey of life is finished.

## GEMS.

A MAN'S character is like his shadow, which sometimes follows and sometimes precedes him, and which is occasionally longer, occasionally shorter, than he is.

Do good for your own satisfaction, and do not care for what follows. Be the cause of grey hairs to no one; nevertheless, for the truth grey hairs are to be disregarded.

THE capacity for happiness, like every other, needs continual exercise for its growth and development. If it is continually checked and postponed it will wither away.

WHATEVER may be true of harmless luxuries in the way of drink, we maintain that health, happiness and work find stimulus enough in the unsophisticated well of nature—pure water.

PERHAPS as a mere matter of government a good despot would make a better government; but for the education of the people governed, a good despotism is worse than freedom with its admixture of folly.

THE road to true philosophy is precisely the same with that which leads to true religion; and from both one and the other, unless we would enter in as little children, we must expect to be totally excluded.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PICKLED GRAPES.—Take fresh grapes from the vines, pick them from the stems without breaking them, and put in a jar; seven pounds of fruit, one quart of vinegar, three pounds of sugar, one tablespoonful whole cloves, and the same of cinnamon bark; boil all together a few minutes, and cool until you can put your finger in it, and pour over the grapes; put a plate over, and set in a cool place. Do not cook the grapes, or heat the pickles over, or disturb for two or three weeks.

SCALLOPED MUTTON.—Remove the fat and skin from cold roast mutton; cut the meat in small thin slices; season it with salt and pepper. Butter a shallow dish; put in a layer of bread or cracker crumb, then a layer of meat, then oysters strained and seasoned, tomato or brown gravy, then crumb, meat, etc., having on the top a thick layer of crumb, moistened in one-third of a cup of melted butter. Cold boiled macaroni, cut into inch pieces, may be used in place of oysters.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE most honourable of all friends is the looking glass; that will not speak, that keeps no secret journal for future treachery, that meets you with the very face you bring to it, that beholds all your weaknesses without obiding, and never hints advice; into whose placid depths sink, as into a sea, in utter forgetfulness, all the secrets which have figured on its face.

"The late Emperor of Germany disliked to hear any one speak slightly of women. When he was Crown Prince, an officer once remarked of a wounded comrade that he was 'weeping like a woman.'" "Never make that comparison," said the Crown Prince, with a frown. "Crying like an unweaned child would be better. Women have more fortitude than men."

It is not generally known that all white champagnes are made from red grapes. To obtain the white colour the liquid must be separated from the pulp and skin immediately after the grape is pressed. But for this precaution all fine champagnes would be red. Consequently the difficulty is not in producing a red champagne, but to obtain an absolutely clear wine, free from sediment.

"NEVER give way to melancholy," says Sydney Smith. "Nothing encroaches more. I fight against it vigorously. One great remedy is to take short views of life. Are you happy? Are you likely to remain so till this evening, or next month, or next year? Then why destroy present happiness by a distant misery, which may never come at all, or you may never live to see it? For every substantial grief has twenty shadows, and most of them shadows of your own making."

AN enormous wave is reported to have struck the beach at Baracoa, in Cuba, recently, and flowed inland for a distance of four hundred feet before it retired. It destroyed in its course nearly three hundred huts and houses, but happily no lives, as the inhabitants saw it coming, and fled to the nearest hill. Curiously enough, the wave was neither tidal nor due to earthquake disturbance, but, it is stated, to a north wind, which had blown for three successive days.

MR. BESANT, studying English life of to-day, says that he does not believe in the idea that a century ago "life was leisure." He has scanned the whole subject carefully, and he can find no exceptional period of leisure. The leisure of the eighteenth century exists, in fact, only in the brain of the poet and painter. Life was hard, labour was incessant, and lasted the whole day long; the shopman lived in the shop—they even slept there—the mill people worked all day long, and far into the night. There was more discontent, poverty, privileges, patronage, profligacy, a half century ago than now. Where was there room for leisure, when there was not "peace, contentment, plenty, wealth, or ease?"

LOST HER CHARMING SHOULDERS.—A beautiful lady in Paris, belonging to the diplomatic circle, lately met with a most peculiar accident at a ball, to the intense delight of her "bosom friends" of the fair sex. The lady in question wore a low-bodied dress of artistic design, which attracted general admiration; but what most riveted the attention of the ball guests were her shoulders of dazzling white. Suddenly her brooch, a splendid cameo, became unfastened, dropped to the ground, and broke to pieces. In her alarm, the fair owner quickly stooped to pick up the fragments. But this rapid movement caused something still more valuable to fall to the ground, viz., a portion of the charming white shoulders of the lady, a piece of a mass resembling porcelain, delicately touched up in blue and pink. The gentlemen gazed in blank astonishment at the damaged beauty, while the ladies giggled in their pocket-handkerchiefs, and the husband ran for a shawl to conceal the misfortune. Tableau!

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

No. 1.—It is quite possible they can do so by arrangement.

G. G. W.—The Capitol at Washington covers nearly three and a half acres.

A. A.—Isocrates was an Athenian orator. He distinguished himself by lecturing on rhetoric and writing orations.

F. M.—Niclas is pronounced nis-l-as; Dionysius, di-o-nys-i-us; Xenophon, zen-o-phon. Agedraus is pronounced a-ge-i-la-us.

CORA.—We cannot give any opinion as to the soundness of any bank, except the Government Post Office Savings Bank, which is quite safe.

W. J.—The Peloponnesian war was caused by a combination of the Peloponnesian States against Athens in the latter part of the fifth century B.C.

R. N. T.—Any leading manager will give you the necessary information upon the subject, or make suggestions that will prove of practical use to you.

AMELIA.—The debt cannot be recovered unless it has been acknowledged in writing during the last six years. 2. Moles have no significance whatever.

B. F. N.—"George Elliot's" first husband's name, Lowe, is pronounced with two syllables, as though spelled "Lulsa," with the accent on the first syllable.

E. G. G.—Modern rules of table etiquette forbid the eating of anything with a knife, except certain kinds of fruit which are cut into slices, when a fruit knife is used.

JEM F.—Our opinion is that the girl referred to is a sickle-minded and vain creature, without any depth of affection, and that you have had a lucky escape from marrying her.

C. M. F.—Unusual clearness of the atmosphere, with corresponding brightness, or twinkling of the stars, indicates rain. A morning rainbow is also regarded as a sign of rain.

C. H. S.—If you have had indoor employment for eight years, and your skin has not become lighter in colour in that time, it is not probable that there is anything that will whiten it.

LEDINE.—An excellent tooth powder is made as follows: Two ounces of prepared chalk, two ounces of Peruvian bark, half an ounce oforris root, and half an ounce of myrrh.

T. F. C.—Your best way is to find out who the girl's friends and companions are and get acquainted with them. You will easily then get an introduction to her own "sweet self."

FRONDA.—Perfect candour is the best course after a lover's quarrel. The best method of reconciliation is the simplest. Write to your lover at once, and explain the circumstances.

C. G. C.—A strong solution of common washing soda and water will generally destroy warts. Keep the solution in a bottle, and apply freely to the warts as often as convenient. Let the soda dry on.

NEEDLES AND PINS.—Four of the specimens sent are shades of seal brown, that tied with light blue being the lightest; the other tied with cardinal is the darkest, being as near black as human hair can be.

GRACIE.—To sweeten a refrigerator, after removing everything out of it, clean it nicely with soap and water, and then set in the inside, on a china plate, a piece of unslaked lime, and let it slake while in the refrigerator.

B. G. L.—"Hazel" is of Assyrian origin, and is sometimes used in naming a boy. It is a Scripture name. "Hazel" is sometimes used in naming a girl by parents who look about for an odd name. It is of modern origin.

M. C. N.—To clean the inside of jars, fill them with water, and stir in a spoonful or two of pearlash. Empty them in about an hour, and if not clean, fill them again, and let them stand another hour or two. For large sized jars lye is excellent.

F. K.—Pinder was a Greek lyric poet, and wrote odes, hymns to the gods, mimic dancing songs, drinking songs, dirges, and panegyrics on rulers. The family to which he belonged was one of the noblest in Thebes, where he was born about 520 B.C.

R. D. H.—The Girondists were a French political party, deriving their name from the deputies of the department of Gironde, whom they acknowledged as their leaders. Madame Roland was their inspirer. See Lamartine's "Histoire des Girondins."

C. H. M.—Charles III., of Germany, was called "the Fat" because of his corpulence, and his inordinate love of the pleasures of the table. He died at the age of fifty-six. He was noted for his incapacity and cowardice. His last days were passed in poverty and seclusion.

MUSIDORA.—It is probable that No. 2 being rather sharp-sighted has discovered your preference for No. 1, and says with the old poet,—

"If she be not fair to me  
What care I how fair she be?"

Don't have anything to do with your fast admirer. If he is dissipated enough for it to be common talk before marriage, he is not likely to mend after. We have no faith in reforming a man—as a general rule—by matrimony.

AMY R.—The relative proportions of the letters, in the formation of words, have been pretty accurately determined, as follows: A, 85; B, 16; C, 30; D, 44; E, 120; F, 25; G, 17; H, 64; I, 80; J, 4; K, 8; L, 40; M, 30; N, 80; O, 80; P, 17; Q, 5; R, 62; S, 80; T, 90; U, 34; V, 12; W, 20; X, 4; Y, 20; Z, 2.

O. C. S.—Webster gives two definitions of the word prose. First, a writer of prose; second, one who prosed, or makes a tedious narration of uninteresting matters. The first definition simply signifies the antithesis of a writer of poetry—a poet. The second signification is the more generally accepted one.

EDITH AND MAUD should be quite content with their personal appearance. The colour is a charm that is only too soon lost, and with regard to the weight and height named, they are anything but excessive. The blushing will wear off as Edith gets older and mixes more in society. It is nothing to be ashamed of, and shows a warm-sensitive disposition.

LETTA.—The largest lake in Mexico is Lake Chapala. Its depth during the floods—July and August—is between six and seven fathoms. In the dry season it is about five fathoms. Its surface is dotted with beautiful islands. It communicates with the Rio Grande de Santiago, to the waters of which river it is supposed to owe its formation. Area, about 1,300 square miles.

LANCASHIRE LADS.—1. No; just about the age to begin. 2. Elizabeth means "the oath of the Lord." Anne "gracious," Fanny "free," and Margaret "a pearl." 3. You ought to know better than we can tell you. There are a thousand and one little ways that a girl can show preference without being either fast or forward, and if the young man is taken with you he will not be slow to perceive that you give him encouragement.

A. T. J.—Among the insignia of court fools, or jesters, were the fool's cap, partly-coloured, adorned with three asses' ears and a cock's comb, and worn on a shorn head; the variously shaped fool's sceptre or bauble; the bells, which decorated the cap and most other parts of the costume; and a wide collar. In England for some time the fools wore calf-skin coats which had the buttons down the back.

## AUTUMN.

The crown of beauty trembles on thy head,  
As, casting backward looks, thou goest to join  
Innumerable predecessors dead,  
Faintly remembered or forgotten all;  
But none of them could boast a grander pall  
Than prodigal nature has allotted thee.

Dear God! How glorious is this autumn land  
Whereon Thou pourest beauty without stint,  
Where every hill-top is an altar flame  
Of joyous sacrifice, with incense bland  
Brought by the censor-swinging winds, which chant  
World-voluntaries and anthems sweet and strong.

I breathe a new life in this scented air,  
Ethereal as violet tints of dawn—  
It is as if a curtain were withdrawn—  
And I can see repeated everywhere  
The miracle of mystic meaning grand,  
The bush which burned and yet was not consumed.

H. T.

N. J. C.—In a list of tall persons we find the names of two women who were seven feet in height, namely, Alice Gordon, of Essex, England, and Anne H. Swan, of Nova Scotia. In addition to this, it is stated that two sisters of M. Louis, a Frenchman, who was seven feet six inches, were nearly as tall as himself.

S. V. J.—1. Spoona vary so much in size that they should not be used as measures in giving powders or medicines. Generally a tablespoon contains about four drachms; a dessertspoon, three drachms; a teaspoon, one drachm. 2. In administering medicines, it is always well to begin with the smallest dose mentioned, and gradually increase until the desired influence is produced.

HARRIET.—You cannot very well write in such terms without to some extent sacrificing your self-respect. It seems to us that if he cared very much for you he would have shown something of it during the five years. Surely when you are in his society you can judge by his manner, and your woman's wit will devise a means to bring him to book if he does love you. If not, give him up. Marriages where the love is all on one side are seldom, if ever, happy.

G. M. S.—Marcus Tullius Cicero is meant. "Tully" is an anglicized form of Tullius, as "Livy" is of Livius, "Pompey" of Pompeius, and "Antony" of Antonius. Until within a century, cultivated persons used the name "Tully" as often, or nearly as often, as that of "Cicero." Cicero, as is well known, was ancient Rome's most distinguished orator. He was born in 106 B.C., and died 43 B.C. He was eminent in politics, and wrote many treatises on philosophical subjects.

L. L. N.—The yellowness of jaundice, according to medical authorities, is caused as follows: The bile is formed by the blood, and not by the liver. The office of the liver is to draw or strain off the bile from the blood, and when the liver is inflamed, or gets sluggish, and will not work, the blood is not relieved of its so-called yellow freight. The bile accumulates, and in attempting to escape through other channels, it lodges in the various tissues, particularly the skin. The entire body of a person who has died of jaundice, including bones, muscles, and membranes, has been found to be full of bile, and coloured yellow.

E. A.—According to your description, both of you are particularly blessed as regards outward charms. But you seem to be material, not to say mercenary, in your views regarding marriage. Remember that a good husband is much more to be preferred than a husband who is only wealthy. As you both have the amount of adipose tissue which nature has determined is best for you, any attempt to make it less or greater by the use of drugs or unnatural dieting might affect your health injuriously.

R. S. J.—Beefsteak rolls are thus prepared: Cut the beefsteak in half lengthwise; that is, split it, and then cut into strips as wide as one's hand. Put over the inside of them one onion. In each strip roll a very thin slice of bread buttered on both sides. Stick two or three cloves in the bread. Put also some pepper, salt, and celery seed; or if celery is in season, small stalks of it cut and put in the gravy. Secure each roll with a piece of thread. Dredge them. Roll in flour, and fry in hot butter. Then put them in a stewpan with water enough to stew them. Serve with gravy.

C. L. P.—1. To make chocolate drops, take one cup of cream and two cups of powdered sugar. Set in a vessel of boiling water, and boil until stiff. Into another vessel of hot water set a half-cup of grated chocolate, and let it melt. Roll the sugar into balls, and dip into the chocolate, and then set away to cool. 2. To candy nuts, take three cups of sugar and one cup of water. Boil until the sugar hardens when dropped in water, then flavour with lemon. The sugar must not boil after the lemon is put in. Put a nut on the end of a fine knitting-needle, and then turn the sugar on the needle until it is cool. If the candy gets cold, set on the stove for a few minutes.

C. H. R.—Galileo was the first to demonstrate the error of supposing the velocity of falling bodies proportional to their weight. He did this by letting drop simultaneously unequal weights from the top of the Tower of Pisa, explaining that the trifling difference of time noticed in their respective descents was due to the resistance of the air to different bulks. The statement of your friend that balls fired upward and downward from a gun is incorrect. The initial motion due to the combustion and explosion of the powder is, of course, the same in all cases, but when the gun is pointed downward, the motion of the ball is accelerated by the attraction of gravitation.

J. H. A.—As you live in a city you have opportunity to learn various kinds of handicraft and accomplishments—painting, designing, book-keeping, copying, type-writing, teaching, making artificial flowers, doing decorative and fancy work—you don't like to sew, you say; you draw the line at that; but there is bead work and braiding, and embroidery, and making lovely things for Christmas shop-windows. We know a nice little girl who supports herself comfortably by going around among her richer acquaintances and doing up their mending for them. She sits and darns laces and stockings, and sews up rips and tears in little frocks or adult garments, and her tongue flies almost as fast as her needle, for she is a cultivated and popular little "Ariel." You write very nicely indeed, and express yourself well.

MINA asks a number of questions. First, about eating water-melon. There should always be a small silver melon-fork to eat it with. Cut it into small squares and eat it with this fork. Fingers are also permissible. They can be used, very daintily and wiped on a napkin. When a lady who is seated is introduced to a gentleman at a party or in a drawing-room where others are present, she need not rise to acknowledge the introduction, unless the gentleman is old or distinguished and she wishes to show him honour. A bow is sufficient. If she is in her own home and a gentleman is introduced to her, it is proper to rise. It is her duty as hostess, or as daughter of the house. No one can tell the character infallibly by the handwriting. There is a theory of indications which has been crystallized into what is called the science of graphology. It is the rules of this that we go by in giving an estimate of character from handwriting. We don't care about doing it, however, as it is not positive. You write well. The indications are of an aspiring nature—one who will not be content to fill a small, idle sphere in life. How can you walk gracefully? By exercising your limbs freely, wearing light skirts, holding yourself up, and putting buoyancy into your step. No affectation. Let your walk be natural. The walk, by the way, is an indication of character. You are troubled about your height and the "lankiness" your brothers tease you about. Well, you are young enough to expect all that to be changed as you develop. Don't lace; use your limbs freely; take outdoor exercise. You will be all right after awhile.

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